

Arch-Bishop

TILLOTSON'S

Eighth Volume



The most Reverend
DR. JOHN TILLOTSON
late Arch Bishop of Canterbury

X

Several
DISCOURSES
OF
REPENTANCE.

Viz.

The Necessity of Repentance
and Faith.

Of confessing and forsaking Sin,
in order to Pardon.

Of Confession, and Sorrow for
Sin.

The Unprofitableness of Sin in
this Life, an Argument for
Repentance.

The Shamefulness of Sin an
Argument for Repentance.

The final Issue of Sin, an Argu-
ment for Repentance.

The present and future Advan-
tage of an Holy and Virtu-
ous Life.

The Nature and Necessity of
holy Resolution.

The Nature and Necessity of
Restitution.

The Usefulness of Considera-
tion, in order to Repen-
tance.

The Danger of Impenitence,
where the Gospel is preach'd.

By the most Reverend
Dr. JOHN TILLOTSON,
Late Lord Arch-Bishop of *Canterbury*.

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Lord Brandon

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more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at
the day of Judgment, than for you.*

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S E R-

SERMON I.

The Necessity of Repentance
and Faith.

Acts XX. 21.

*Testifying both to the Jews, and also
to the Greeks, repentance toward God,
and faith toward our Lord Jesus
Christ.*

TO have seen St. *Paul* in the
Pulpit, was one of those three
things which St. *Augustine*
thought worth the wishing for. And
sure it were very desirable to have seen
this glorious Instrument of God, who
did such wonders in the World, to have
heard that plain and powerful Elo-
quence of his, which was so mighty
through God, for the casting down of
B strong

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strong holds, and the subduing of men to the obedience of the Gospel; to have beheld the zeal of this holy man, who was all on fire for God, with what ardency of affection, and earnestness of expression, he perswaded men to come in to Christ, and entertain the Gospel. This were very desirable; but seeing it is a thing we cannot hope for, it should be some satisfaction to our curiosity, to know what St. Paul preached, what was the main Subject of his Sermons, whither he refer'd all his Discourses, and what they tended to. This he tells us in the words that I have read to you, that the main substance of all his Sermons was repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Occasion of the words was briefly this. St. Paul being in his Journey to *Jerusalem*, and intending to be there by the day of *Pentecost*, that he might not be hindred in his Journey, he resolves to pass by *Ephesus*, and only to call to him the Elders of the Church to charge them with their duty, and the care of the Church; and to engage them hereto, he tells them how

he

he had carried and demeaned himself among them, v. 18. with what diligence and vigilance he had watched over them, with what affection and earnestness he had preached to them, v. 19, 20. And here in the Text he tells them, what had been the sum of his Doctrine, and the substance of those many Sermons he had preached among them, and what was the End and Design of all his Discourses, viz. To perswade men to *repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ; Testifying both to the Jews and Greeks, &c.*

I shall explain the words a little, and then fix upon the *Observations* which I intend to speak to, because I design this only as a Preface to some larger Discourses of Faith and Repentance.

For explication. *Testifying*, the word is *μαρτυρεῖν*, which signifies to testify, to prove a thing by testimony; so 'tis used, *Heb. 2. 6. But one in a certain place testifieth, saying.* In heathen Writers the word is often used in a Law sense, for contesting by Law, and pleading

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pleading in a Cause; and from hence it signifies, earnestly to contend or persuade by arguments and threatnings. In the use of the LXX. it signifies to protest, to convince, to press earnestly, to persuade. It is used most frequently by St. Luke in a very intense signification, and is sometimes joined with exhorting, which is an earnest persuading to a thing, *Acts 2. 40. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, save your selves from this untoward generation; and with Preaching, Acts 8. 25. And when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord; and so Acts 18. 5. Being pressed in spirit, he testified to the Jews, that Jesus was the Christ. Being pressed in spirit, signifies intention and vehemency in testifying to them, that he did vehemently endeavour to convince them; it seems to be equivalent to the expression, v. 28. where it is said, *Apollos did mightily convince the Jews that Jesus was the Christ; that is, did use such Persuasions and Arguments as were sufficient to convince; and to mention no more, Acts 28. 23. He expounded and testified the Kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus.**

St. Paul in his Epistle to Timothy useth this word in a most vehement sense, for giving a solemn charge, 1 Tim. 5. 21. *I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ*, the word is διαμαρτυροῦμαι; and so 2 Tim. 2. 14. *charging them before the Lord, that they strive not about words*; and so 2 Tim. 4. 1. *I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ*; and here in the Text the word seems to be of a very high and intense signification because of the circumstances mentioned before and after; he tells us before, that he taught them at all seasons, v. 18. *publicly and from house to house*, v. 20. and afterwards at the 31. v. that *he warned them day and night with tears*. So that *testifying to the Jews Repentance and Faith*, must signifie his pressing and perswading of them with the greatest vehemency, to turn from their sins, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; his charging on them these things as their duty, his pleading with them the necessity of Faith and Repentance, and earnestly endeavouring to convince them thereof.

Repentance toward God, and Faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ: What is

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the Reason of this appropriation of *Repentance* and *Faith*, the one as properly respecting God, and the other *our Lord Jesus Christ* ? I answer. *Repentance* doth properly respect God, because he is the party offended, and to whom we are to be reconciled ; the *Faith* of the Gospel doth properly refer to *the Lord Jesus Christ*, as the chief and principal Object of it ; so that by *testifying to them repentance towards God*, &c. we are to understand that the Apostle did earnestly press and perswade them to repent of their sins, whereby they had offended God, and to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, as *the Messiah*, the person that was ordained of God, and sent to be the Saviour of the world.

From the Words thus explained, this is the *Observation* that doth naturally arise,

That Repentance and Faith are the sum and substance of the Gospel ; and that Ministers ought with all earnestness and vehemency to press people to repent and believe, to charge them with these as their duty, and by all means

means to endeavour to convince them of the necessity of them.

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Serm. I.

In the handling of this I shall do these *Two* things.

*First*, Shew you what is included in *Repentance* and *Faith*, that you may see that they are the sum of the Gospel. And,

*Secondly*, Shew you the necessity of them.

*First*, What is included in these.

I. *Repentance*; this properly signifies a change of mind, a conviction that we have done amiss, so as to be truly sorry for what we have done, and heartily to wish that we had not done it. To repent, is to alter our mind, to have other apprehensions of things than we had, to look upon that now as evil, which we did not before; from whence follows sorrow for what we have done, and a resolution of mind for the future not to do again that which appears now to us to be so evil, that we are ashamed of it, and troubled for it, and wish we

Vol. 8. had never done it. So that repentance implies a conviction that we have done something that is evil and sinful, contrary to the Law we are under, and those Obligations of duty and gratitude that lie upon us, whereby God is highly provoked and incensed against us, and we in danger of his wrath, and the sad effects of his displeasure; upon which we are troubled, and grieved, and ashamed for what we have done, and wish we had been wiser, and had done otherwise; hereupon we resolve never to do any thing that is sinful, that is contrary to our duty and obligations to God, and by which we may provoke him against us. These *two* things are contained in a true repentance, a deep sense of, and sorrow for the evils that are past, and the sins that we have committed; and a firm purpose and resolution of obedience for the future, of abstaining from all sin, and doing whatever is our duty; the true effect of which Resolution, is the breaking off the practice of sin and the course of a wicked life, and a constant course of obedience.



II. *Faith in Christ* is an effectual believing the Revelation of the Gospel, the *History* and the *Doctrine* of it; the *History* of it, that there was such a person as Jesus Christ, that he was the true *Messias*, prophesied of and promised in the Old Testament, that he was born and lived and preached, and wrought the Miracles that are recorded, that he was crucified and rose again, and ascended into Heaven, that he was *the Son of God*, and sent by him into the world, by his *Doctrine* to instruct, and by the Example of his life to go before us in the way to happiness, and by the Merit and Satisfaction of his death and sufferings, to appease and reconcile God to us, and to purchase for us the pardon of our sins and eternal life, upon the Conditions of Faith and Repentance and sincere Obedience; and that to enable us to the performance of these Conditions, he promised and afterward sent his Holy Spirit, to accompany the preaching of his Gospel, and to assist all Christians to the doing of that which God requires of them; this is the *History* of the Gospel.

Now

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Now the *Doctrine* of it contains the Precepts and Promises and Threatnings of it, and Faith in Christ includes a firm belief of all these ; of the Precepts of the Gospel as the matter of our duty, and the Rule of our life ; and of the Promises and Threatnings of the Gospel, as arguments to our duty, to encourage our Obedience, and deter us from sin. So that he that believes the Lord Jesus, believes him to be the great Guide and Teacher sent from God, to bring and conduct men to eternal happiness, and that therefore we ought to hearken to him and follow him ; this is to believe his *Prophetical Office*. He believes that he is *the Author of salvation*, and hath purchased for us forgiveness of sins, ransom from hell, and eternal life and blessedness upon the Conditions before mentioned, and therefore that we ought to rely upon him only for salvation, to own him for our Saviour, and to beg of him his holy Spirit, which he hath promised to us, to enable us to perform the Conditions required on our part ; this is to believe his *Priestly Office*. And lastly, He believes that the Precepts of the Gospel, being

being delivered to us by the Son of God, ought to have the authority of Laws upon us, and that we are bound to be obedient to them; and for our encouragement if we be so, that there is a glorious and eternal Reward promised to us; and for our terror if we be not, there are terrible and eternal Punishments threatned to us; to which Rewards, the Lord Jesus Christ at the day of Judgment, will sentence men, as the great Judge of the world; and this is to believe the *Kingly Office* of Christ. And this is the sum of that which is meant by *Faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ*, which the Apostle saith was one Subject of his preaching.

And the proper and genuine effect of this Faith, is to live as we believe, to conform our lives to the Doctrine, to the truth whereof we assent. Hence it is that true Christians, that is, those who fashioned their lives according to the Gospel, are call'd *believers*; and the whole of Christianity is many times contained in this word *believing*, which is the great Principle of a Christian life. As in the Old Testament all Reli-



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gion is expressed by *the fear of God*; so in the New, by *Faith in Christ*.

And now you see what is included in *Repentance and Faith*, you may easily judge whether these be not the sum of the Gospel, that men should forsake their sins and turn to God, and believe the Revelation of the Gospel concerning Jesus Christ, that is, heartily entertain it and submit to it. What did Christ preach to the *Jews*, but that they would repent of their sins, and believe on him as the *Messias*? And what did the Apostles preach, but to the same purpose? When St. Peter preached to the Jews, *Acts 2* the effect of his Sermon and the scope of it was to persuade them *to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus*, that is, to profess their belief in him, v. 38. And so *Acts 3.19*. This is the conclusion of his discourse, *repent therefore and be converted*, and then he propounded Christ to them as the Object of their Faith, being *the great Prophet* that was prophesied of by *Moses*, who should *be raised up among them*, v. 22. So likewise St. Paul when he preached to the Jews and Gentiles, these were his great Subjects,

jects, *Acts 17. 30.* This is the conclusion of his Sermon to the *Athenians*, to perswade them to repent by the consideration of a future Judgment; and to perswade them to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was to be the Judge of the world, from the Miracle of his Resurrection; *But now he commands all men every where to repent, because he hath appointed a day, &c. whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.* So that you see that these are the great Doctrines of the Gospel, and were the sum of the Apostles preaching; all their Sermons were perswasives to these two Duties of *Repentance* and *Faith*.

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Serm. i.

*Secondly,* For the Necessity of these Doctrines. They are necessary for the escaping of eternal misery, and attaining of everlasting happiness. And this will appear, by considering the Nature of them, and the Relation they have to both these.

For the avoiding of eternal punishment, 'tis necessary the guilt should be removed, which is an obligation to punish-

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punishment, and that cannot be but by pardon; and sure we cannot imagine that God will ever pardon us without repentance; he will never remit to us the punishment of sin, so long as we tell him we are not at all troubled for what we have done, and we are of the same mind still, and will do the same again; and till we repent, we tell God this, and we may be sure God will not cast away his Pardons upon those that despise them; so that Repentance is necessary to the escaping of Hell.

And Faith in Christ is necessary to it; for if this be the method of God's grace, not to pardon sin without Satisfaction, and Jesus Christ hath made Satisfaction for sin by the merit of his Sufferings, and if it be necessary that we should believe this, that the benefit hereof may redound to us; then Faith in Christ is necessary to the obtaining of the pardon of sin, by which the guilt of sin is removed, that is, our obligation to eternal punishment.

And then for attaining Salvation. Christ having in the Gospel revealed to us the way and means to eternal  
happi-



happinefs, it is neceffary that we fhould believe this Revelation of the Gospel by Jesus Chrift, in order to this end. So that you fee the neceffity of Faith and Repentance, becaufe without thefe we can neither efcape Mifery, nor attain to Happinefs.

I fhould now come to draw fome Inferences from this Difcourfe, but I will firft give fatisfaction to a *Query* or two, to which this Difcourfe feems to have given occafion.

1. *Query.* You will fay, why do I call *Repentance* a Doctrine of the Gospel? It is a Doctrine of Nature. Natural Religion tells us, that when we have offended God, we ought to be forry for it, and refolve to amend and reform.

*Ans.* I do not make the Doctrine of Repentance proper to the Gospel, as if it had not been revealed to the world before; but becaufe it is a Doctrine which the Gospel very much preffeth and perfwadeth men to, and becaufe the great Motives and Enforcements of it are peculiar to the Gospel.

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pel. So that the Doctrine of Repentance, considered with those powerful Reasons and Arguments to it which the Gospel furnisheth us withal, is in this sense proper to the Gospel, and not known to the world before.

There are *two* Motives and Enforcements to Repentance which the Gospel furnisheth us with.

1. Assurance of Pardon and Remission of sins in case of repentance, which is a great encouragement to repentance, and which, before the Gospel, the world had never any firm and clear assurance of.

2. Assurance of eternal Rewards and Punishments after this life, which is a strong Argument to perswade men to change their lives, that they may avoid the misery that is threatned to impenitent sinners, and be qualified for the Happiness which it promiseth to Repentance and Obedience. And this the Apostle tells us in the forementioned place, *Acts* 17. 30, 31. is that which doth as it were make Repentance to be a new Doctrine that did come

come with the Gospel into the world, because it was never before enforced with this powerful Argument; *the times of that ignorance, God winked at; but now he calls upon all men everywhere to repent; because, &c.* When the world was in *ignorance*, and had not such assurance of a future state, of eternal Rewards and Punishments after this life, the Arguments to Repentance were weak and feeble in comparison of what they now are, the necessity of this Duty was not so evident. But now God hath assur'd us of a future Judgment, now Exhortations to Repentance have a commanding power and influence upon men; so that *Repentance*, both as it is that which is very much prest and inculcated in the Gospel, and as it hath its chief Motives and Enforcements from the Gospel, may be said to be one of the great Doctrines of the Gospel.

*Query 2.* Whether the preaching of *Faith in Christ*, among those who are already Christians, be at all necessary? Because it seems very improper, to press those to believe in Christ, who are already perswaded that he is the *Messias*,

C

and



Vol. 8. and do entertain the History and Doctrine of the Gospel.

*Ans.* The *Faith* which the Apostle here means, and which he would persuade men to, is an *effectual belief of the Gospel*; such a Faith as hath real effects upon men, and makes them to live as they believe; such a Faith as persuades them of the need of these Blessings that the Gospel offers, and makes them to desire to be partakers of them, and in order thereto to be willing to submit to those Terms and Conditions of Holiness and Obedience, which the Gospel requires. This is the *Faith* we would persuade men to, and there is nothing more necessary to be prest upon the greatest part of Christians than this; for how few are there among those who profess to believe the Gospel, who believe it in this effectual manner, so as to conform themselves to it? The Faith which most Christians pretend to, is meerly negative; they do not disbelieve the Gospel, they do not consider it, nor trouble themselves about it, they do not care nor are concerned whether it be true or not; but they have not a  
positive

positive belief of it, they are not possess with a firm perswasion of the truth of those matters which are contained in it; if they were, such a perswasion would produce real and positive effects. Every man naturally desires Happiness, and tis impossible that any man that is possess with this belief, that in order to Happiness it is necessary for him to do such and such things, and that if he omit or neglect them he is unavoidably miserable, that he should not do them. Men *say* they believe this or that, but you may see in their lives, what it is they believe. So that the preaching of *this Faith in Christ*, which is the only true Faith, is still necessary.

I. *Inference.* If *Repentance towards God, and Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ*, be the sum and substance of the Gospel, then from hence we may infer the Excellency of the Christian Religion, which insists only upon those things that do tend to our Perfection and our Happiness. *Repentance* tends to our recovery, and the bringing of us back as near as may be to innocence. *Primus innocentia gradus est non peccasse;*

Vol. 8. *secundus, penitentia*: and then *Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ*, tho it be very comprehensive, and contains many things in it, yet nothing but what is eminently for our advantage, and doth very much conduce to our happiness. The *Historical* part of the Gospel acquaints us with the Person and Actions of our Saviour, which conduceth very much to our understanding of the Author and Means of our Salvation. The *Doctrinal* part of the Gospel contains what God requires on our part, and the Encouragements and Arguments to our Duty, from the consideration of the Recompence and Rewards of the next life. The *Precepts* of *Christ's Doctrine* are such as tend exceedingly to the Perfection of our Nature, being all founded in Reason, in the Nature of God, and of a reasonable Creature; I except only those positive Institutions of the Christian Religion, the two Sacraments, which are not burthensome, and are of excellent use. This is the *first*.

II. We may learn from hence what is to be the sum and end of our Preaching, to bring men to Repentance and



a firm belief of the Gospel; but then it is to be considered, that we preach *Repentance*, so often as we preach either against sin in general, or any particular sin or vice; and so often as we persuade to holiness in general, or to the performance of any particular Duty of Religion, or to the exercise of any particular Grace; for Repentance includes the forsaking of sin, and a sincere resolution and endeavour of reformation and obedience. And we preach *Repentance* so often as we insist upon such Considerations and Arguments, as may be powerful to deter men from sin, and to engage them to holiness. And we preach *Faith* towards our Lord Jesus Christ, so often as we declare the grounds of the Christian Religion, and insist upon such Arguments as tend to make it credible, and are proper to convince men of the Truth and Reasonableness of it; so often as we explain the Mystery of Christ's Incarnation, the History of his Life, Death, Resurrection, Ascension, and Intercession, and the proper Ends and Use of these; so often as we open the Method of God's Grace for the salvation of sinners, the Nature of the

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Covenant between God and us, and the Conditions of it, and the way how a sinner is justified and hath his sins pardoned, the Nature and Necessity of Regeneration and Sanctification; so often as we explain the Precepts of the Gospel, and the Promises and Threatnings of it, and endeavour to convince men of the Equity of Christ's Commands, and to assure them of the Certainty of the Eternal Happiness which the Gospel promises to them that obey it, and of the Eternal Misery which the Gospel threatens to those that are disobedient; all this is preaching *Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ*,

III. This may correct the irregular humor and itch in many people, who are not contented with this plain and wholesom food, but must be gratified with sublime Notions and unintelligible Mysteries, with pleasant passages of Wit, and artificial strains of Rhetorick, with nice and unprofitable Disputes, with bold interpretations of dark Prophecies, and peremptory Determinations of what will happen next year, and a punctual stating of the time

when

when *Anti-Christ* shall be thrown down, and *Babylon* shall fall, and who shall be employed in this Work. Or if their humor lies another way, you must apply your self to it, by making sharp Reflections upon matters in present controverſie and debate, you must dip your ſtile in Gall and Vinegar, and be all Satyr and Inveſtive againſt thoſe that differ from you, and teach people to hate one another, and to fall together by the ears; and this men call *Gospel preaching*, and *ſpeaking of Seasonable Truths*.

Serm. I.

Surely *St. Paul* was a *Gospel Preacher*, and ſuch an one as may be a Pattern to all others; and yet he did none of theſe; he preached what men might underſtand, and what they ought to believe and praſtiſe, in a plain and unaffected and convincing manner; he taught *ſuch things as made for peace*, and *whereby he might edifie and build up men in their holy Faith*. The Doctrines that he preached will never be unſeaſonable, that men ſhould leave their ſins, and believe the *Gospel*, and live accordingly.



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And if men must needs be gratified with Disputes and Controversies, there are these great Controversies between God and the sinner to be stated and determined; Whether this be Religion, to follow our own lusts and inclinations, or to endeavour to be like God, and to be conformed to him, in Goodness, and Mercy, and Righteousness, and Truth, and Faithfulness? Whether Jesus Christ be not the *Messias* and Saviour of the World? Whether Faith and Repentance and sincere Obedience be not the Terms of Salvation, and the necessary Conditions of Happiness? Whether there shall be a future Judgment, when all men shall be sentenc'd according to their works? Whether there be a Heaven and Hell? Whether good men shall be eternally and unspeakably happy, and wicked men extremely and everlastingly miserable? These are the great Controversies of Religion, upon which we are to dispute on God's behalf against sinners. God asserts, and sinners deny these things, not in Words, but which is more emphatical and significant, in their Lives and Actions. These are practical

practical Controversies of *Faith*, and it concerns every man to be resolved and determined about them, that he may frame his life accordingly.

Serm. I.

And so for *Repentance*; God says, *Repentance* is a forsaking of sin, and a thorow change and amendment of life; the sinner says, that it is only a formal Confession, and a slight asking of God forgiveness: God calls upon us speedily and forthwith to repent; the sinner saith 'tis time enough, and it may safely be defer'd to sickness or death; these are important Controversies and matters of moment. But men do not affect common Truths; whereas these are most necessary: And indeed whatever is generally useful and beneficial, ought to be common, and not to be the less valued, but the more esteemed for being so.

And as these Doctrines of *Faith* and *Repentance* are never unseasonable, so are they more peculiarly proper when we celebrate the Holy Sacrament, which was instituted for a solemn and standing Memorial of the Christian Religion, and is one of the most powerful

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ful Arguments and Persuatives to repentance and a good life.

The Faith of the Gospel doth more particularly respect the death of Christ; and therefore it is call'd *Faith in his Blood*, because *that* is more especially the Object of our Faith; the Blood of Christ, as it was a Seal of the truth of his Doctrine, so it is also a Confirmation of all the Blessings and Benefits of the New Covenant.

And it is one of the greatest Arguments in the World to Repentance. In the Blood of Christ we may see our own guilt, and in the dreadful Sufferings of the Son of God, the just desert of our sins; *he hath born our griefs, and carried our sorrows, he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities*; therefore the Commemoration of his Sufferings should call our sins to remembrance, the Representation of his Body broken, should melt our hearts; and so often as we remember that *his blood was shed for us, our eyes should run down with rivers of tears*; so often as we look upon him whom we have pierced, we should mourn over him.

When

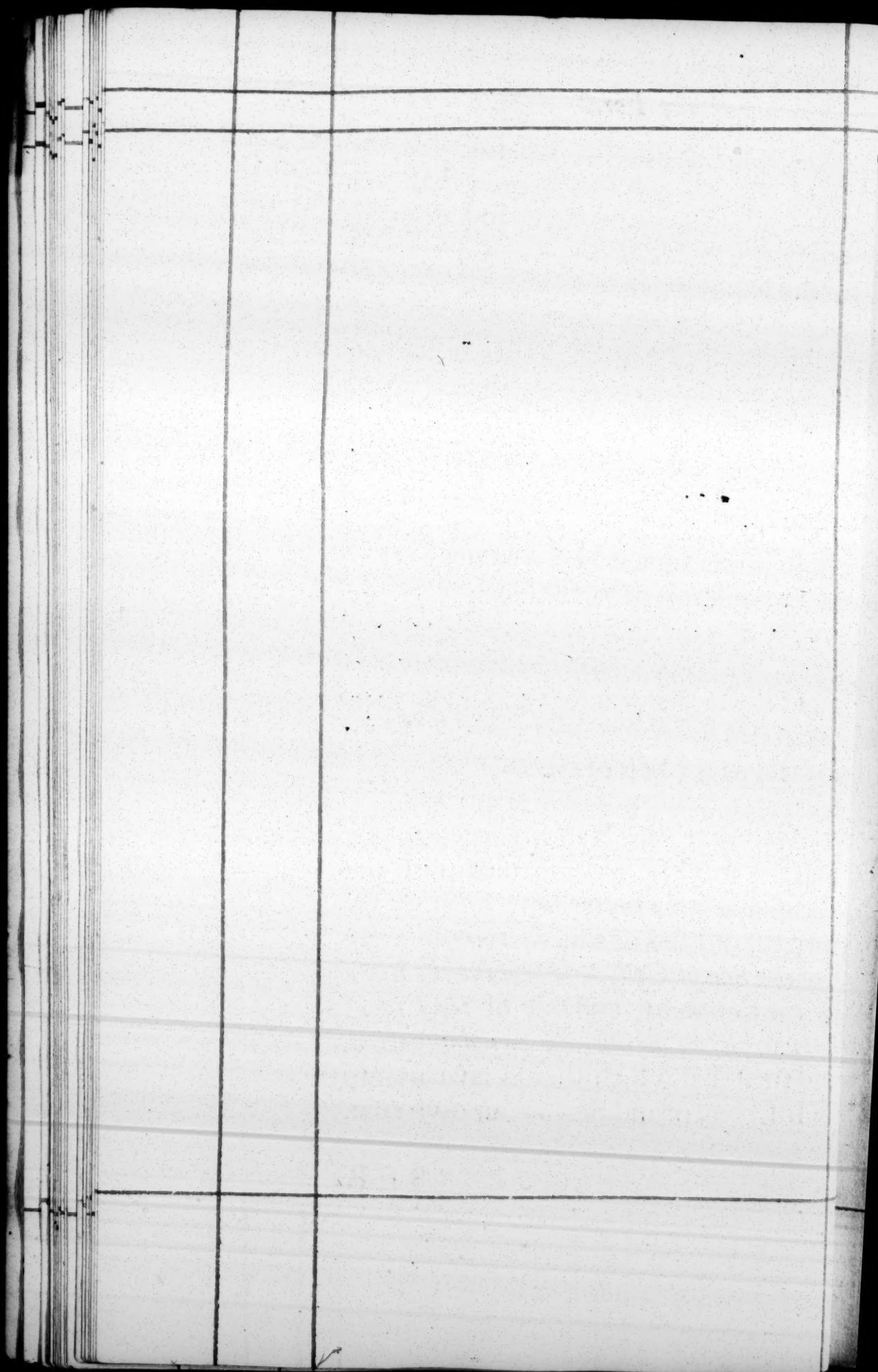


When the Son of God suffer'd, *the rocks were rent in sunder*; and shall not the consideration of those sufferings be effectual to break the most stony and obdurate heart?

What can be more proper when we come to this Sacrament, than the renewing of our Repentance? When we partake of this Passover, we should *eat it with bitter herbs*. The most solemn Expressions of our Repentance fall short of those Sufferings which our blessed Saviour underwent for our sins. If *our head were waters, and our eyes fountains of tears*, we could never sufficiently lament the cursed Effects and Consequences of those provocations which were so fatal to the Son of God.

And that our Repentance may be real, it must be accompanied with the Resolution of a better life; for if we return to our sins again, *we trample under foot the Son of God, and profane the Blood of the Covenant, and out of the Cup of Salvation we drink our own damnation*, and turn that which should save us into an Instrument and Seal of our own ruin.

S E R.



# SERMON II.

Preach'd on *Ash-Wednesday*.

Of confessing and forsaking Sin,  
in order to Pardon.

PROV. XXVIII. 13.

*He that covereth his sins shall not prosper :  
but whoso confesseth and forsaketh  
them, shall have mercy.*

**S**ince we are all sinners, and liable to the Justice of God, it is a matter of great moment to our comfort and happiness, to be rightly informed by what Means, and upon what Terms, we may be reconciled to God, and find mercy with him. And to this purpose the Text gives us this advice and direction, *whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sin shall have mercy.*

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In which words there is a great Blessing and Benefit declared and promised to sinners, upon certain Conditions. The Blessing and Benefit promised, is *the mercy and favour of God*, which comprehends all the happy Effects of God's mercy and goodness to sinners. And the Conditions upon which this Blessing is promised are two, *Confession of our sins, and forsaking of them*; and these two contain in them the whole nature of that great and necessary Duty of Repentance, without which a sinner can have no reasonable hopes of the mercy of God.

I. Here is a Blessing or Benefit promised, which is *the mercy and favour of God*. And this in the full extent of it, comprehends all the Effects of the mercy and goodness of God to sinners, and doth primarily import the pardon and forgiveness of our sins. And this probably *Solomon* did chiefly intend in this expression; for so the *mercy* of God doth most frequently signify in the Old Testament, *viz.* the forgiveness of our sins. And thus the Prophet

phet explains it, *Isa. 55.7. Let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*

But now since the clear revelation of the Gospel, the *mercy* of God doth not only extend to the pardon of sin, but to power against it; because this also is an Effect of God's free grace and mercy to sinners, to enable them, by the grace of his holy Spirit, to master and mortifie their lusts, and to persevere in Goodness to the end.

And it comprehends also our final pardon and absolution at the great day, together with the glorious Reward of eternal life, which the Apostle expresseth, by *finding mercy with the Lord in that day.* And this likewise is promised to Repentance, *Acts 3. 19. Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord, and he shall send Jesus Christ, who before was preached unto you; that is, that when Jesus Christ*  
who

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who is now preached unto you shall come, you may receive the final sentence of absolution and forgiveness.

And thus much shall suffice to have spoken of the Blessing and Benefit here promised, *the mercy of God*; which comprehends all the Blessed Effects of the divine grace and goodness to sinners, the present pardon of sin, and power to mortifie sin, and to persevere in a good course, and our final absolution by the sentence of the great day, together with the merciful and glorious Reward of eternal life.

II. We will consider in the next place, the Conditions upon which this Blessing is promised, and they are two, the *Confessing and Forsaking* of our sins, *Who so confesseth and forsaketh his sin, shall have mercy*; and these two do contain and constitute the whole nature of Repentance, without which a sinner can have no reasonable hopes to find *mercy* with God. I begin with the

*First*



*First*, the *Confession* of our sins; by which is meant a penitent acknowledgment of our faults to God; to *God* I say, because the *Confession* of our sins to *Men* is not, generally speaking, a Condition of the forgiveness of them, but only in some particular cases, when our sins against God are accompanied and complicated with scandal and injury to men. In other cases the *Confession* of our sins to men is not necessary to the pardon of them, as I shall more fully shew in the progress of this Discourse.

All the difficulty in this matter is, that the *Confession* of our sins is opposed to the *covering* and *concealing* of them: *he that covereth his sin shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth them, shall have mercy.* But no man can hope to hide his sin from God, and therefore confession of them to God cannot be here meant. But this Objection, if it be of any force, quite excludeth *Confession* to God, as no part of *Solomon's* meaning; when yet *Confession* of our sins to God, is granted on all hands, to be a necessary Condition of the

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forgiveness of them. And to take away the whole ground of this Objection; men are said in Scripture, when they do not confess their sins and repent of them, to hide and conceal them from God: Not to acknowledge them is as if a man went about to cover them. And thus *David* opposeth *confession of sins to God*, to the *hiding* of them, *Psal. 32. 5. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine Iniquity have I not hid: I said I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord.* So that this is no reason, why the Text should not be understood of the Confession of our sins to God.

But because the necessity of confessing our sins to men (that is, to the Priest) in order to the forgiveness of them, is a great point of difference between us and the Church of *Rome*, it being by them esteemed a necessary Article of Faith, but by us, so far from being necessary to be believed, that we do not believe it to be true; therefore for the clear stating of this matter, I shall briefly enquire into these Two things.

I. Whe

I. Whether Confession of our sins to the Priest, as taught and practised in the Church of *Rome*, be necessary to the forgiveness of them.

II. How far the disclosing and revealing of our sins to the Ministers of God is convenient upon other accounts, and for other purposes of Religion.

I. Whether Confession of our sins to the Priest, and the manner in which it is taught and practised in the Church of *Rome*, be necessary to the forgiveness of them. What manner of Confession this is, the Council of *Trent* hath most precisely determined, *viz.*  
 " Secret Confession to the Priest alone,  
 " of all and every mortal sin, which  
 " upon the most diligent search and  
 " examination of our Consciences we  
 " can remember our selves to be guilty of, since our Baptism; together  
 " with all the Circumstances of those  
 " sins, which may change the nature  
 " of them; because without the perfect knowledge of these, the Priest  
 " cannot make a judgment of the na-



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ture and quality of mens sins, nor  
 “ impose fitting Penance for them.  
 This is the Confession of sins required  
 in the Church of *Rome*, which the same  
 Council of *Trent*, without any real  
 ground from Scripture or Ecclesiastical  
 Antiquity, doth most confidently af-  
 firm, “ to have been instituted by our  
 “ Lord, and by the Law of God to be  
 “ necessary to Salvation, and to have  
 “ been always practised in the Catho-  
 “ lick Church.

I shall as briefly as I can examine  
 both these Pretences, of the Divine  
 Institution, and Constant Practice of  
 this kind of Confession.

*First*, For the Divine Institution of it,  
 they mainly rely upon three Texts; in  
 the first of which there is no menti-  
 on at all of Confession, much less of a  
 particular Confession of all our sins  
 with the Circumstances of them; in  
 the other two there is no mention of  
 Confession to the Priest: and yet all  
 this ought clearly to appear in these  
 Texts, before they can ground a Di-  
 vine Institution upon them; for a Di-  
 vine Institution is not to be founde  
 upo

upon obscure Consequences, but upon plain words. Serm. 2.

The *First* Text, and the only one upon which the Council of *Trent* grounds the Necessity of Confession, is *John 20. 23. Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained:* It is a sign they were at a great loss for a Text to prove it, when they are glad to bring one that hath not one word in it concerning Confession, nor the least intimation of the necessity of it.

But let us see how they manage it to their purpose. The Apostles and their Successors (saith *Bellarmino*) by this power of *remitting* and *retaining sins*, are constituted Judges of the case of Penitents; but they cannot judge without hearing the Cause, and this infers particular Confession of sins to the Priest, from whence he concludes it necessary to the forgiveness of sins.

But do not the Ministers of the Gospel exercise this power of *remitting*  
D 3
*sins*

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*sins* in Baptism? And yet particular Confession of all sins to the Priest is not required, no not in the Church of *Rome*, in the Baptism of adult Persons. And therefore according to them, particular Confession of sin to the Priest, is not necessary to his exercising the power of *remitting sins*, and consequently the necessity of Confession cannot be concluded from this Text.

And to shew how they are puzzled in this matter, *Vasquez* by a strange device concludes the necessity of Confession from the power of *retaining sins*; for (says he) if the Priest have a power of *retaining sins*, that is of denying Pardon and Absolution to the Penitent, then he may impose Confession as a Condition of forgiveness, and not absolve the Penitent upon other terms. But supposing the Priest to have this unreasonable power, this makes Confession no otherwise necessary by Divine Institution, than going to *Jerusalem* or *China* is, in order to the forgiveness of our sins, or submitting to any other foolish condition, that the Priest thinks fit to require.

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for according to this way of reasoning, this power of *retaining sins*, makes every foolish thing that the Priest shall impose upon the Penitent, to be necessary by Divine Command and Institution.

But the truth is, this power of *remitting* and *retaining sins*, is exercised by the Ministers of the Gospel, in the administration of the Sacraments, and the preaching of the Gospel, which is call'd *the word of reconciliation*, the ministry whereof is committed to them. And thus the antient Fathers understood it; and as a great Divine told them in the Council of Trent, it was perhaps never expounded by any one Father concerning the business of Confession.

The Second Text they alledge to this purpose is, 1 John 1. 9. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.* Here indeed is Confession; but general, not particular, as appears by the opposition, *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive our selves, and the truth is not in us: but if we confess our sins, that is, if we*

Vol. 8. acknowledge our selves to have been sinners. And then here is not a word of confessing to the Priest; the Confession here meant is plainly to God, because it follows, *he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins*, that is God, who is necessarily understood in the former part of the sentence; as if it had run thus, *if we confess our sins to God, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins*.

The Third Text is, *Jam. 5. 16. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another*. And here again there is only mention of Confession, but not a word of the Priest; and for another Reason, if I had been to advise them, they should not have prest this Text for their service in this cause, because it does them as much hurt as good; for it is certain, the Duty of Confession here enjoined is reciprocal and mutual, *confess your sins one to another*: So that if by virtue of this Text the People are bound to confess their sins to the Priest, the Priest is hereby as much obliged to confess his sins to the People; which I dare say is more than they have a mind to prove from this Text.

**Text.** The plain meaning whereof is this, that as Christians should be ready to perform all mutual Offices of Charity, so to assist and comfort one another by their Counsel and Prayers. And therefore the Apostle adviseth Christians when they are sick, if at the same time they be under any spiritual trouble, by reason of the Guilt of any sin lying upon their Consciences, to lay open their case to one another, that so they may have the help of one anothers Advice and Prayers; *Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed,* both of your bodily and spiritual distemper. Not that the Priest or Minister is here excluded; St. James had spoken of that particular before, that when *any was sick*, he should send for the *Elders of the Church*, that he might in the first place have the benefit of *their* Counsel and Prayers; and then because private Christians may also be useful to one another in this kind, he adds, that they should also lay open their condition and troubles *to one another*, that so they might have the help of one anothers Advice and Prayers; and very probably all the Confession here meant of



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of private Christians *to one another* is of the offences and injuries they may have been guilty of, one towards another; that they should be reconciled upon this occasion, and as a testimony of their Charity, should *pray one for another*; whereas they are bound *to send for the Elders of the Church*, and *they are to pray over them*, as an act not only of *Charity*, but of *Superiority*, and by virtue of their Office in the Church, a more especial blessing being to be expected from *their Prayers*.

These three Texts are the main Arguments from Scripture, which they of the Church of *Rome* bring to prove their auricular or secret Confession to be of Divine Institution; and woful proofs they are: which shews what miserable shifts they are reduced to, who resolve to maintain a bad cause.

I proceed in the *Second* place, to discover the Falshood of their other Pretences, that this kind of Confession hath always been practised in the Catholick Church; and not only so, but believed absolutely necessary to the remission

mission of mens sins and their eternal salvation.

Serm. 2.

The truth of the whole matter is this: Publick Confession and Penance for open and scandalous Crimes was in use, and with great strictness observed in the first Ages of Christianity; and there was then no general Law or Custom, that exacted secret Confession of sins to the Priest, as a necessary part of repentance, and condition of forgiveness: afterward publick Penance was by degrees disused, which plainly shews that, in the opinion of the Church, this Discipline, how useful soever, was not of absolute necessity to restore men to the favour of God.

In place of this came in private Confession to the Priest, particularly appointed to this Office, and call'd *the Penitentiary*; but upon occasion of a scandal that hapned, this also was abrogated by *Neectarius* Bishop of *Constantinople*; which shews that neither was this necessary. And this act of *Neectarius* was justified by his Successor *St. Chrysostom*, who does over and over most expressly teach, that Confessi-

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on of our sins to men is not necessary to the forgiveness of them, but that it is sufficient to confess them to God alone; so that St. *Chrysostom* does plainly stand condemned by the Decrees of the Council of *Trent*.

And thus for several Ages the matter rested, till the degeneracy of the Church of *Rome* growing towards its height, about the IX. and X. Centuries, some began to contend for the necessity of secret Confession; and this in the year 1215. in the IV. Council of *Lateran* under Pope *Innocent III.* was decreed and establish'd.

And this is the first publick Law that was made in the Christian Church concerning this matter, notwithstanding all the boasts of the Council of *Trent*, about the antiquity of this Institution and Practice; for *Gratian*, who lived about 50 years before this Council, tells us, that in his time several wise and religious men were of the contrary opinion, and did not hold Confession necessary by virtue of any Divine Law. Afterwards in the Council of *Florence*, and especially in that

of



of *Trent*, this Decree of the Council of *Lateran* was confirmed and enlarged in many particulars, of which I have already given some account.

Serm. 2.

And whereas they pretend for themselves the universal Practice not only of the past, but present Church, we are able to shew from clear Testimony of their own Writers, that Confession, as taught and practised in the Church of *Rome*, is no where else in use at this day, neither among the *Abyssines*, nor *Indians* of *St. Thomas*, nor the *Nestorians*, nor the *Armenians*, nor the *Jacobites*, Churches of great antiquity and vast extent. And as for the *Greek* Church, if we may believe *Gratian*, and the Author of the Gloss upon the Canon Law, the *Greeks* had antiently no Tradition concerning the necessity of Confession, nor do they at this day agree with the *Roman* Church in all points concerning it.

So that, in short, there is no Nation nor Church throughout the whole world, that bears the name of Christian, the *Roman* Church only excepted, that doth fully embrace and maintain the whole

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whole Doctrine of the Council of *Trent* concerning Confession; and yet according to their principles, the whole is of equal necessity to be believed, as any part of it. With what face then do they declare, that this manner of Confession always was, and still is observed in the Catholick, that is, in the whole Christian Church?

I have not time to shew the great and manifold inconveniences and mischiefs of this practice: How infinite a torture it is to the Consciences of men, by entangling them in endless doubts and scruples; and how great a scandal it is to the Christian Profession, in the lewd management of it by the Priests, is evident from the two Bulls of Pope *Pius* the IV. and *Gregory* XV. which mention things too shameful to be declared; not to insist upon other horrible abuses of it to the vilest and wickedest purposes; not so much to direct the Consciences of men, as to dive into their Secrets, of which there are so many plain and notorious Instances, that they are past denial.

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The other thing pretended for it is, that it is a great restraint upon men from sin. And very probably it is so, to modest and well disposed persons: but experience shews how quite contrary an effect it hath upon others, who are the far greatest part of mankind. Does not all the world see in the Popish Countries, in the time of their Carnival, just before *Lent*, the Anniversary season of Confession, how scandalous a liberty men take of doing lewd and wicked things; and that for this very Reason, because their Consciences are presently to be eased and scour'd (as they call it) by Confession and Absolution? And they therefore take the opportunity to gratifie their lusts, and fill up the measure of their iniquity at that time; because with one labour they can set their Consciences right, and clear them of all guilt. And they look upon this as a special piece of spiritual good husbandry, to quit their scores with God at once, that so they may have no occasion to trouble him, nor the Priest, nor themselves again for a good while after. So that Confession, instead of being a restraint from



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from sin, gives great encouragement to it, by deluding men into a vain hope of obtaining the pardon of their sins from time to time, tho they still continue in the practice of them; by which device, mens sins are at once *remitted* and *retained*; the Priest remits them by Absolution, and the Penitent retains them, by going on still in the Commission of them, in hope of obtaining a new Absolution as often as occasion shall require. I proceed to the

II. Enquiry, namely, How far the disclosing and revealing our sins to the Ministers of God, may be convenient upon other accounts, and to other purposes of Religion? To which the Answer is very plain and short; so far as is necessary either to the direction, or the ease of mens Consciences.

There are many Cases wherein men under the guilt and trouble of their sins, can neither appease their own minds, nor sufficiently direct themselves, without recourse to some pious and prudent Guide; in these cases, men  
certain

certainly do very well, and many times prevent a great deal of trouble and perplexity to themselves, by a timely discovery of their condition to some faithful Minister, in order to their direction and satisfaction, without which they shall never perhaps be able to clear themselves of the obscurity and entanglement of their own minds, but by smothering their trouble in their own breasts, shall proceed from one degree of melancholy to another, till at last they be plunged either in distraction or despair; whereas the discovery of their condition in time, would prove a present and effectual remedy. And to this purpose, a general Confession is for the most part sufficient; and where there is occasion for a more particular discovery, there is no need of raking into the particular and foul circumstances of mens sins, to give that advice which is necessary for the cure and ease of the Penitent; a thing so far from being desirable, that it must needs be very grievous to every modest and good man.

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And

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And thus far Confession is not only allowed, but encouraged among Protestants. In the *Lutheran Churches*, *Chemnitius* tells us, that private general Confession is in use and practice. And *Calvin* freely declares, that he is so far from being against peoples repairing to their Pastors to this purpose, that he earnestly wisheth it were every where observed before the receiving of the Sacrament. And the same is the sense of our own Church, laying no necessity upon men in this matter, but advising, especially before the Sacrament, those who have any trouble upon their Consciences, to repair to some discreet and faithful Minister of God's Word, for advice and satisfaction. And thus all the good use, which can be made of Confession, may be had in our Church, without the ill Effects and Consequences of the *Romish* Confession, and without laying a Yoke upon the Consciences of men, which our Saviour never laid.

And now I have, as briefly and as plainly as I could, stated this Controversie between us and the Church of

*Rome*



Rome, concerning the necessity and use of secret Confession to the Ministers of God, as the proper Guides and Directors of our Consciences. But it is granted on all hands, that Confession of our sins to God is necessary; and there is no doubt but it is here intended in the Text, viz. a Penitent acknowledgment of our sins; the nature whereof I shall briefly explain to you.

And it must not only be a general Confession that we are sinners; but there must be a particular acknowledgment of our sins to God, so far as upon a particular discussion and examination of our Consciences, we can call them to remembrance; especially our most heinous sins, which our Consciences will not suffer us to forget, must be particularly acknowledged, with the several aggravations of them.

And this Confession must be accompanied with such a shame and sorrow for our sins, as produceth in us a sincere resolution to leave them, and to betake our selves to a better course. These are the principal ingredients of a Penitent Confession:

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I. There

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1. There must be shame, without which there is no hope of amendment. Confession always supposeth conviction of a fault; and he that is truly convinced that he hath done amiss cannot but be ashamed of what he hath done. And thus the Penitents in Scripture were wont to make Confession of their sins to God; *Ezra* 9. 6. *O my God (says he) I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee my God.* So *Jeremiah*, *Ch. 3. 25.* *We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covereth us; for we have sinned against the Lord.* And so likewise *Daniel*, *Ch. 9. 5.* *We have sinned, and have committed Iniquity, and done wickedly; unto us belongeth confusion of Face.* And thus our Saviour describes the Penitent behaviour of the Publican, as ashamed to look up to that God whom he had offended, *Luke* 18. 13. *He would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven; but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.*

2. Confession must be always accompanied with great sorrow for our sin  
conf

considering the great dishonour we have brought to God, and the danger into which we have brought ourselves; *I will declare mine iniquity,* (says David) *and I will be sorry for my sin.*

And this Sorrow must be proportionable to the degree of our Sin. If we have been very wicked, and have sinned greatly against the Lord, and *have multiplied our transgressions*, and continued long in an evil course, have neglected God, and *forgotten him days without number*, the measure of our sorrow must bear some proportion to the degree of our Sins: If they have been *as Scarlet and Crimson*, (as the Prophet expresseth it) that is, of a deeper dye than ordinary, our Sorrow must be as deep as our Guilt; for tis not a slight trouble and a few tears that will wash out such stains.

Not that tears are absolutely necessary, tho they do very well become, and most commonly accompany a sincere Repentance. All tempers are not in this alike; some cannot express their sorrow by tears, even then when they



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are most inwardly and sensibly grieved. But if we can easily shed tears upon other occasions ; certainly *rivers of tears* ought to *run down our eyes*, because we have broken Gods Laws, the Reasonable, and Righteous, and good Laws of so good a God, of so Gracious a Sovereign, of so mighty a Benefactor, of the Founder of our Being, and the perpetual Patron and Protector of our Lives : but if we cannot command our tears, there must however be great trouble and contrition of Spirit, especially for great sins ; to be sure to that degree as to produce the

3. Property I mentioned of a Penitent Confession, namely, a sincere Resolution to leave our sins, and betake our selves to a better course. He does not confess his fault, but stand in it, who is not resolved to amend. True Shame and Sorrow for our Sins is utterly inconsistent with any thought of returning to them. It argues great obstinacy and impudence to confess a fault and continue in it. Whenever we make Confession of our sins to God, surely it is meet to say unto him, *I will not offend any more, that which I know*

*Forsaking Sin a condition of Pardon.*

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*not teach thou me ; and if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.*

Serm. 2.

This is the *first* part of Repentance mention'd in the Text, the first Condition of our finding mercy with God, the Penitent acknowledgment of our sins to him. I proceed to the

*Second Condition* required to make us capable of the mercy of God, which is the actual *forsaking* of our sins ; *Whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.* I shall not go about to explain what is meant by *forsaking sin*, it is that which every body can understand, but few will do ; there lies all the difficulty. I shall only put you in mind, that forsaking of sin comprehends our return to our duty, *that* necessarily follows from it. In sins of Commission, he that hath left any Vice, does thereby become master of the contrary Virtue. *Virtus est vitium fugere* ; not to be drunk, is to be sober ; not to oppress, or defraud, or deal falsely, is to be Just and Honest : And for sins of Omission, the forsaking of them is nothing else, but the doing of those Duties which we omitted and

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neglected before. And therefore what Solomon here calls *forsaking of sin*, is elsewhere in Scripture more fully exprest, by *ceasing to do evil, and learning to do well*, Isa. 1. 16. By forsaking our sins and turning to God; Isa. 55. 7. *Let the wicked man forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord.* By turning from all our sins, and keeping all Gods Laws and Statutes; Ezek. 18. 21. *If the wicked will turn from all his sins which he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right.*

And this is a most Essential part of Repentance, and a necessary condition of our finding mercy with God. That part of Repentance which I have mentioned and insisted upon before, the Penitent acknowledgment of our sins to God, with Shame and Sorrow for them, and a firm purpose and Resolution to leave them, all this is but preparatory to the actual forsaking of them: that which perfects and compleats our Repentance, is to turn from our evil ways, and to break off our sins by righteousness.

And



And these terms of *confessing* and *for-  
saking our sins*, are Reasonable in them-  
selves, and Honourable to God, and  
Profitable to us; and upon lower Terms  
we have no reason to expect the Mercy  
of God, nor in truth are we capable  
of it, either by the present forgiveness  
of our sins, or the final absolution of  
the great day, and the blessed Reward  
of eternal Life. God peremptorily  
requires this change as a condition of  
our Forgiveness and Happiness; *Repent  
and be converted, that your sins may be  
blotted out*, Acts 3. 19. *If thou wilt  
enter into life, keep the commandments*,  
Matth. 19. 17. *Without holiness no  
man shall see the Lord*, Heb. 12. 14.  
And why should any man hope for  
the Mercy of God upon other Terms,  
than those which he hath so plainly and  
peremptorily declared?

It is a mean and unworthy thought  
of God, to imagine that he will accept  
men to his favour and eternal life up-  
on other Terms than of better obedi-  
ence. Will any wise Father or Prince  
accept less from his Children and Sub-  
jects? will they be satisfied with sighs  
and

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and tears, as well as with Obedience And well pleaſed if they be but melancholy for their faults, tho they never mend them? We muſt not impute that to God, which would be a defect of Wiſdom and good Government, in any Father or Prince upon Earth. God values no part of Repentance upon any other account, but as it tends to reclaim us to our Duty, and ends in our Reformation and Amendment.

This is that which qualifies us for the Happineſs of another Life, and *makes us meet to be made partakers of the inheritance of the Saints in light.* And without this, tho God ſhould be pleaſed to forgive us, yet we could not forgive our ſelves; and notwithstanding the legal diſcharge from Guilt, the Sting of it would remain, and we ſhould, like our firſt Parents after they had ſinn'd, run away and *hide our ſelves from God,* tho he ſpoke never ſo kindly to us. God hath placed in every Man's mind an inexorable Judge, that will grant no Pardon and Forgiveness but to a reformed Penitent, to him that hath ſuch a ſenſe of the Evil of his paſt

past Life, as to become a better man for the future.

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Serm. 2.

And whoever entertains any other notion of the Grace and Mercy of God to Sinners, confounds the Nature of Things, and does plainly overthrow the Reason of all Laws, which is to restrain men from Sin: But when it is committed, to pardon it without Amendment, is to encourage the Practice of it, and to take away the Reverence and Veneration of those Laws, which seem so severely to forbid it. So that next to impunity, the forgiveness of Mens sins upon such easie and unfit Terms, gives boldness and encouragement to sin, and must necessarily in the opinion of men lessen the Honour and Esteem of God's Laws.

And thus I have considered and explained both the Blessing and Benefit which is here promised and declared, viz. *the Mercy and Favour of God*, which comprehends both the present Forgiveness of our Sins, and Power against them, and Grace to persevere in Goodness to the end, and our final

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Abolution at the great day, and the Glorious and Merciful Reward of Eternal Life: and likewise the Conditions upon which this Blessing is promised, *viz.* the Penitent *acknowledgment* of our sins to God, with such Shame and Sorrow for them, as produceth a sincere Resolution of leaving them, and returning to a better course, and the *actual forsaking* of them, which involves in it our actual return to our Duty, and a Constant and Sincere Obedience to the Laws of God in the future course of our lives.

I shall now make some Application of this Discourse to our selves. I am sure we are all nearly concerned in it. The best of us have many sins to confess and forsake; some of us very probably have need to change the whole course of our Lives, to put us into a Capacity of the Mercy of God. This work can never be unseasonable; but there cannot be a more proper time for it, than when we are solemnly preparing our selves to receive the Holy Sacrament; in which as we do commemorate the great Mercy of God to Mankind, so we do likewise renew
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and confirm our Covenant with him, that Holy Covenant wherein we engage our selves to forsake our sins, as ever we expect the forgiveness of them at God's hand.

Serm. 2.

To perswade us hereto, be pleased to consider the Reasonableness of the Thing, the infinite Benefit and Advantage of it; and which is beyond all other Arguments, the absolute Necessity of it, to make us capable of the Mercy and Forgiveness of God, in this World and the other, and *to deliver us from the wrath which is to come, and from those terrible storms of vengeance, which will infallibly fall upon impenitent Sinners: So that we have all the Reason and all the Encouragement in the World, to resolve upon a better course. Upon this Condition, the Mercy of God is ready to meet and embrace us, God will pardon our greatest Provocations, and be perfectly reconciled to us. So he hath declared by the Prophet, Isaiah 1. 16. Wash ye, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well. Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord; tho'*
your

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your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; tho' they be red as crimson, they shall be as wool. And what greater Encouragement can we desire, than that upon so easie and advantageous Terms, God should be so ready to have an end put to all Controversies and Quarrels between him and us?

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the Mercies of God, to take up a serious Resolution to break off your sins by repentance, and to reform whatever, upon due search and tryal of your ways, you shall find to be amiss in your lives.

I beseech you by the Mercies of God, that Mercy which naturally leads to repentance, and which is long-suffering to us-ward, on purpose that we may not perish, but come to repentance; which hath spared us so often, and is not yet exhausted and tired out by our intolerable obstinacy, and innumerable provocations; that mercy which moved the Son of God to become man, to live among us, and to die for us; who now as it were speaks to us from the Cross,

Cross, extending his pierced Hands, and painful Arms to embrace us, and through the gasping wounds of his side let us see the tender and bleeding Compassion of his Heart; that *mercy* which if we now despise it, we shall in vain one day implore, and catch hold of, and hang upon, to save us from sinking into Eternal Perdition; that *mercy*, which how much soever we now presume upon, will then be so far from interposing between us and the wrath of God, that it will highly inflame and exasperate it: For whatever impenitent sinners may now think, they will then certainly find that the Divine Justice, when it is thoroughly provoked, and whetted by his abused Mercy and Goodness, will be most terribly severe, and like a Razor set with Oyl, will cut the keener for its smoothness.

Consider this all ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver: Consider and shew yourselves men, O ye transgressors!

We do consider all this (may some perhaps say) but we have been great sinners,

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sinners, so great, that we doubt whether our case be not already desperate.

This, if it be sensibly said, with deep Sorrow and Contrition, with that Shame and Confusion of face, which becomes great offenders, is a good Confession, and the best Reason in the World, why ye should now *break off your sins*: For if what you have already done, do really make your case so doubtful and difficult; do not by sinning yet more and more against the Lord, make it quite Desperate and past Remedy; do but you *repent*, and God will yet *return and have Mercy upon you*. And do not say you cannot do it, when it must be done, or you are undone. Power and Necessity go together; when men are hard prest they find a power which they thought they had not; and when it comes to the push, men can do that which they plainly see they either must do, or be ruined for ever.

But after all this, I am very sensible how great a need there is of God's powerful Assistance in this case, and

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that it is not an ordinary resolution, and common measure of God's Grace, that will reclaim those who have been long habituated to an evil course.

Let us therefore earnestly beg of him, that he would make these Counsels effectual, that he would *grant us repentance unto life*, that he would make us all sensible of our faults, sorry for them, and resolved to amend them; and let us every one put up *David's* prayer to God for our selves, *Deal with thy Servant according to thy mercy, and teach me thy statutes; order my steps in thy word, and let not any iniquity have dominion over me; teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes, that I may keep them unto the end.*

I have now done; I am only to mind you of another Duty, which is to accompany our Repentance, and Fasting, and Prayer, as a Testimony of the Sincerity of our Repentance, and one of the best means to make our Fasting and Prayer acceptable to God, and to turn away his Judgments from us, and that is Charity and Alms to the Poor, whose number is very great among us,

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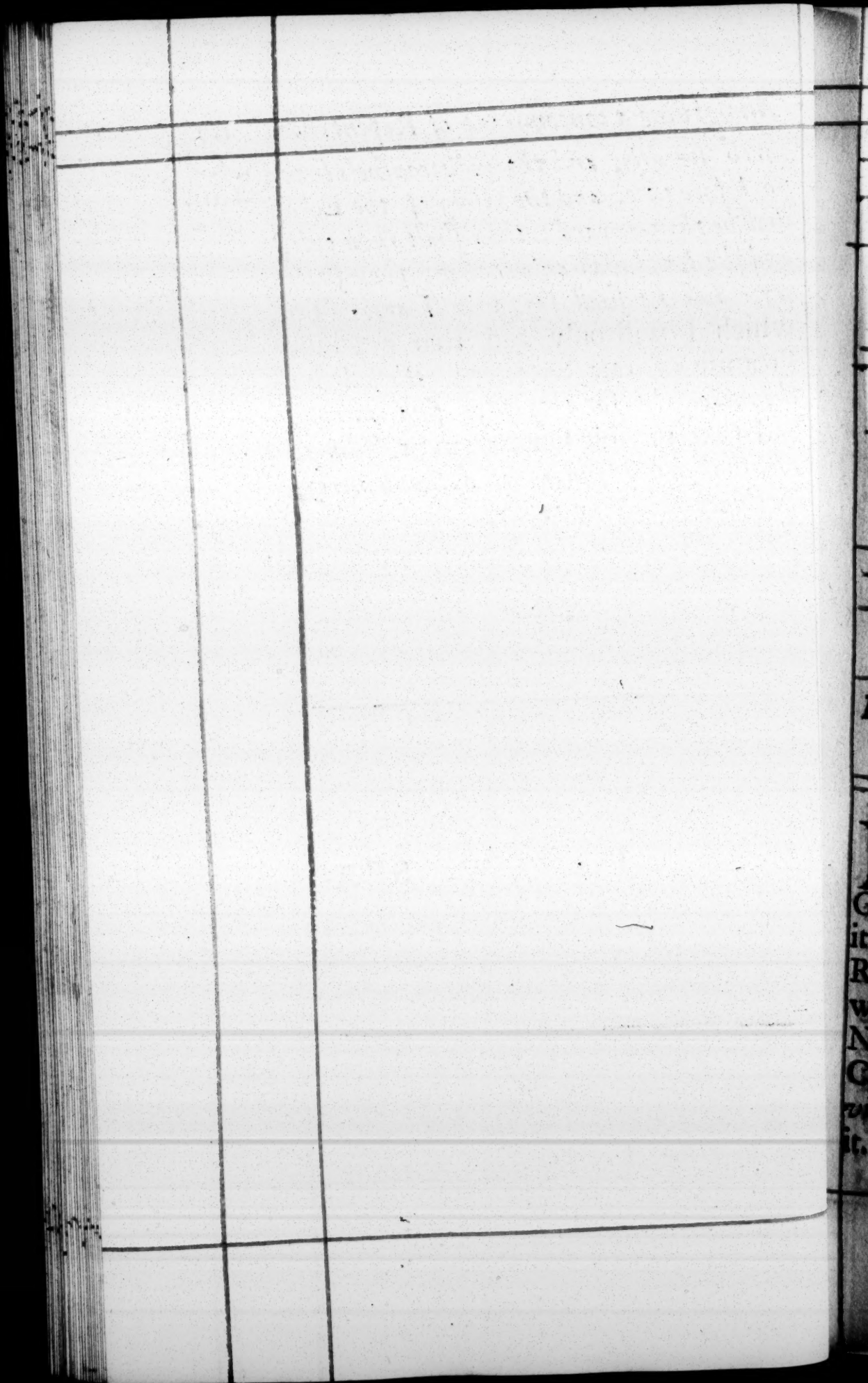
and their necessities very pressing and clamorous, and therefore do call for a bountiful Supply.

And to convince men of the Necessity of this Duty, and the Efficacy of it in conjunction with our Repentance and Fasting, and Prayers, I shall only offer to your consideration a few plain Texts of Scripture, which need no comment upon them. *Dan. 4. 27.* it is the Prophet's advice to *Nebuchadnezzar*; *Break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquity by shewing mercy to the poor; if so be it may be a lengthning of thy tranquillity.* *Acts 10. 4.* the Angel there tells *Cornelius*, *Thy Prayers and thine Alms are come up for a memorial before God.* *Isa. 58. 5.* *Is not this the fast which I have chosen, to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burthens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out, to thy house; when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thy self from thy own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth*

forth speedily, and thy righteousness shall go before thee, and the Glory of the Lord shall be thy reward; then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer thee; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, here I am. To which I will only add that gracious Promise of our Saviour; Blessed are the merciful, for they shall find mercy; and that terrible sentence in St. James, He shall have Judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy.

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SERMON III.

Of Confession, and Sorrow for Sin.

PSAL. XXXVIII. 18.

I will declare mine iniquity, and be sorry for my Sin.

IN this Psalm *David* does earnestly beg Mercy and Forgiveness of God, and in order to the obtaining of it, he declares both his Sins, and his Repentance for them in these Words, which contain in them two of the Necessary Ingredients, or at least Concomitants of a true Repentance, viz. Confession of Sin, and Sorrow for it.

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I shall speak something of the *first* of these, *viz.* Confession of Sin: but the *Second*, *viz.* Sorrow for Sin, shall be the main Subject of my Discourse.

I. Confession of Sin; *I will declare mine Iniquity*, or as it is in the Old Translation, *I will confess my wickedness*. Of which I shall speak under these *three* Heads.

I. What Confession of Sin is.

II. How far 'tis necessary.

III. What are the Reasons and Grounds of this Necessity.

I. What Confession of Sin is. It is a Declaration or Acknowledgment of some moral Evil or Fault to another, which we are conscious to our selves we have been guilty of. And this Acknowledgment may be made by us, either to God or Man. The Scripture mentions both. Confession of our Sins to God is very frequently mentioned in Scripture, as the first and necessary part of Repentance; and sometimes

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and in some cases Confession to men is not only recommended, but enjoyned. Serm. 3.

II. How far Confession of our Sins is Necessary. That it is necessary to confess our Sins to God, the Scripture plainly declares, and is I think a matter out of all dispute. For it is a Necessary part of Repentance, that we should confess our Sins to God, with a due sense of the evil of them; and therefore the Scripture maketh this a Necessary qualification, and Condition of Pardon and Forgiveness. *Prov. 28. 13. Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall have mercy.* 1 John 1. 9. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness;* implying that if we do not confess our sins to God, the guilt of them will still remain; to God I say, for of Confession to him St. John plainly speaks, when he says, *He is faithful and just;* Who? God surely; who tho he be not named before, yet is necessarily understood in the words before; *If we confess our sins, i. e. to God, he is faithful and just.*

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A general Confession of our sins is absolutely necessary; and in some cases a particular acknowledgment of them, and repentance for them, especially if the sins have been great and deliberate and presumptuous; in this Case a particular Confession of them, and Repentance for them, is necessary so far as we can particularly recollect them, and call them to Remembrance: Whereas for sins of ignorance and infirmity, of surprize and daily incurfion, for lesser Omissions, and the Defects and Imperfections of our best Actions and Services, we have all the Reason that can be to believe, that God will accept of a general Confession of them, and Repentance for them. And if any Man ask me, where I find this distinction in Scripture, between a general and particular Repentance; I answer, that it is not necessary it should be any where exprest in Scripture, being so clearly founded in the Nature and Reason of the thing; because in many cases it is not possible that we should have a particular Knowledge and Remembrance of all our particular Sins; as is plain in Sins of ignorance, since our very
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calling them by that Name, does necessarily suppose that we do not know them. It is impossible we should remember those Sins afterwards, which we did not know when they were committed : And therefore either a general Repentance for these and the other Sins I mentioned of the like Nature must be sufficient in order to the Pardon of them ; or we must say, that they are unpardonable, which would be very unreasonable, because this would be to make lesser Sins more unpardonable than those which are far greater.

And yet tho this difference between a general and particular Repentance be no where expressly mention'd in Scripture, there does not want foundation for it there. Psal. 19. 12. *Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret Sins,* (i. e.) Such as we do not discern and take notice of, when they are committed : And yet *David* supposeth, that upon a general Acknowledgment of them, and Repentance for them, we may be cleansed from them ; tho we cannot make a particular Acknowledgment

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ledgment of them, and exercise a particular Repentance for them, because they are *secret*, and we do not particularly understand what they are.

As for our confessing our Sins to Men, both Scripture and Reason do in some cases recommend and enjoin it. As,

1. In order to the obtaining of the Prayers of good men for us. *James 5. 16. Confess your Sins one to another*; he said before, *the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up*. This in all probability is meant of the Miraculous Power of Prayer, which *St. Chrysostom* reckons among the Miraculous Gifts of the Spirit, bestowed upon Christians in the first Ages of the Church: and this is very much countenanc'd and confirm'd by what presently follows after this command of *Confessing our Sins one to another, and praying one for another*, and given as the Reason of it; for the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous Man availeth much, the Original is *ἐν ὁμοθυμαδὸν, the inspir'd prayer*, which in the verse before, is call'd *the prayer of faith*,

faith, meaning that Miraculous Faith, in the Power whereof Christians did obtain of God whatever they were inspir'd to ask of him; according to our Saviour's promise in the Gospel, concerning the efficacy of the Prayers of Christians, which we find mention'd among the other Miraculous Powers, which were to be conferr'd upon them by the coming of the Holy Ghost.

2. Confession of our Sins to Men is likewise reasonable, in order to the ease and satisfaction of our minds, and our being directed in our Duty for the future. In this Case common Reason and Prudence, without any Precept of Scripture, will direct men to have recourse to this remedy, *viz.* to discover and lay open our disease to some skilful spiritual Physician, to some faithful Friend or prudent Guide, in order to spiritual advice and direction, for the peace and satisfaction of our minds. And then,

3. In case our Sins have been publick and scandalous, both Reason and the Practice of the Christian Church do

Vol. 8. do require, that when men have publicly offended, they should give public Satisfaction, and open Testimony of their Repentance.

But as for private and *auricular Confession* of our Sins to a Priest in all cases, and as of absolute necessity to our obtaining Pardon and Forgiveness from God, as the Church of *Rome* teacheth, this is neither necessary by divine Precept, nor by any Constitution and Practice of the antient Christian Church, as I have shewn in my former discourse.

Not to mention the bad consequences of this Practice, and the impious and dangerous use which hath been made of this Seal of Confession, for the concealing and carrying on of the most wicked and barbarous designs; and the debauching of the Penitents, by drawing them into the Commission of the same and greater Sins, than those which they confessed; which the more devout Persons of that Church have frequently complain'd of. I proceed now to shew briefly in the

III. Place,

III. Place, the Grounds and Reasons of the necessity of confessing our Sins to God ; and I shall but just mention them.

1. From the Precept and Command of God ; for which I have already produced clear Proof of Scripture.

2. From the Nature of the thing, because without this there can be no Repentance towards God. He that will not so much as own the faults which he hath been guilty of, can never repent of them. If we will not confess our Sins to God, we are never like to be sorry for them. Thus much for the *first* thing in the Text, the Confession of our Sins. I proceed now to the

Second Ingredient of Repentance mentioned in the Text, which is Sorrow for Sin ; *I will declare mine iniquity, and be sorry for my Sin.* In the handling of this Argument, I shall

I. Consider the Nature of this Passion of Sorrow.

II. The

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II. The Reason and Grounds of our Sorrow for Sin.

III. The Measure and Degrees of it.

IV. How far the outward expression of our inward grief by Tears is necessary to a true Repentance.

I. For the Nature of this Passion. Sorrow is a trouble or disturbance of Mind, occasioned by something that is evil, done or suffer'd by us, or which we are in danger of suffering, that tends greatly to our damage or mischief: So that to be sorry for a thing, is nothing else but to be sensibly affected with the Consideration of the evil of it, and of the mischief and inconvenience which is like to redound to us from it: Which if it be a Moral evil, such as Sin is, to be sorry for it, is to be troubled that we have done it, and to wish with all our hearts that we had been wiser, and had done otherwise; and if this Sorrow be true and real, if it abide and stay upon us, it will produce a firm Pur-

Purpose and Resolution in us, not to do the like for the future.

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'Tis true indeed, that we are said to be sorry for the death and loss of Friends; but this is rather the effect of Natural Affection than of our Reason, which always endeavours to check and moderate our grief for that which we cannot help, and labours by all means to turn our Sorrow into Patience: And we are said likewise to grieve for the miseries and sufferings of others; but this is not so properly Sorrow as Pity and Compassion. Sorrow rather respects our selves, and our own doings and sufferings. I proceed in the

II. Place to enquire into the Reasons and Grounds of our Sorrow for Sin; and they, as I have already hinted, are these *two*; the Intrinsical, or the Consequent evil of Sin; either the evil of Sin in it self, or the mischiefs or inconveniences which it will bring upon us. For every one that is sorry for any fault he is guilty of, he is so upon one of these *two* accounts; either upon the score of ingenuity, or of interest; either because he hath done a thing which is unwor-

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unworthy in it self, or because he hath done something which may prove prejudicial to himself ; either out of a principle of love and gratitude to God, or from a principle of self-love. And tho the former of these be the better, the more generous princip'e of Sorrow ; yet the latter is usually the first ; because it is the more sensible, and toucheth us more nearly : For Sin is a base and ill-natur'd thing, and renders a Man not so apt to be affected with the injuries he hath offer'd to God, as with the Mischief which is likely to fall upon himself. And therefore I will begin with the latter, because it is usually the more sensible cause of our Trouble and Sorrow for Sin.

I. The great Mischief and Inconvenience that Sin is like to bring upon us. When a Man is thoroughly convinc'd of the danger into which his sins have brought him, that they have *made him a child of wrath, and a Son of perdition*, that he is thereby fallen under the heavy displeasure of Almighty God, and liable to all those dreadful curses which are written in his Book, that ruin and destruction hang
over

over him, and that nothing keeps him from eternal and intolerable torments, but the Patience and Long-suffering of God, which he does not know how soon it may cease to interpose between him and the wrath of God, and let him fall into that endless and insupportable misery, which is the just portion and desert of his Sins; he that lays to heart the sad Estate and Condition into which he hath brought himself by Sin, and the Mischiefs which attend him every moment of his continuance in that state, and how near they are to him, and that there is but a step between him and Death, and hardly another between that and Hell, he cannot surely but be very sorry for what he hath done, and be highly displeased and offended with himself, that he should be the Author of his own ruin, and have contributed as much as in him lies to his everlasting undoing.

2. Another and better Principle of Sorrow for Sin, is ingenuity; because we are sensible, that we have carried our selves very unworthily towards God, and have been injurious to him,

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who hath laid all possible obligations upon us: For he hath made us, and hath given us our beings, and hath charged his watchful Providence with the continual care of us; his bounty hath ministred to the necessities and comforts of our Life; all the Blessings that we enjoy, are the Effects of his meer love and goodness, without any hope of requital, or expectation of any other return from us, than of love, of gratitude, and obedience; which yet are of no advantage to him, but very beneficial and comfortable to our selves: For he does not expect Duty and Obedience from us, with any regard of Benefit to himself, but for our sakes, and in order to our own Happiness.

Nay, his kindness did not stop here, but after we had abused him by our repeated provocations, yet he still continued his care of us; and when we had farther provoked him to withdraw his Love, and to call in his abused Goodness, and had done what lay in us to make our selves miserable, he would not suffer us to be undone, but found out a Ransom for us, and hath contrived

contrived a way for the pardon of all our offences, and to reconcile us to himself, and to restore us to Happiness, by the most stupendous and amazing condescension of love and goodness that ever was, even by giving his only Son to dye for us.

And can we reflect upon all this, and not be sorry and grieved at our very hearts, that we should be so evil to him, who hath bin so good to us; that we should be so undutiful to so loving a Father, so unkind to so faithful and constant a Friend, so ungrateful and unworthy to so mighty a Benefactor? If any thing will melt us into Tears, surely this will do it, to consider that we have sinned against him, who made us, and continually preserves us, and after all our unkindness to him, did still retain so great a love for us, as to redeem us from Hell and Destruction, By the Death and Suffering of his Son, and notwithstanding all our offences does still offer us Pardon and Peace, Life and Happiness. Such Considerations as these, seriously laid to

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heart, should one would think break the hardest heart, and make Tears to gush even out of a Rock. I proceed in the

III. Place to consider the Measure and Degree of our Sorrow for Sin. That it admits of degrees, which ought to bear some proportion to the heinousness of our Sins, and the several aggravations of them, and the time of our continuance in them, is out of all dispute: For tho' the least Sin be a just cause of the deepest Sorrow; yet because our greatest grief can never bear a due proportion to the vast and infinite evil of Sin, God is pleased to require and accept such measures of Sorrow, as do not bear an exact correspondence to the Malignity of Sin, provided they be according to the capacity of our Nature, and in some sort proportioned to the degree and aggravations of our Sins; *i. e.* Tho' the highest degree of our Sorrow doth necessarily fall below the evil of the least Sin; yet God requires that we should be more deeply affected with some Sins, than others.

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But what is the lowest degree which God requires in a true Penitent, and will accept, as it is impossible for me to tell, so it is unprofitable for any body to know: For no Man can reasonably make this enquiry with any other design, than that he may learn how he may come off with God upon the cheapest and easiest terms. Now there cannot be a worse sign, that a Man is not truly sensible of the great evil of Sin, than this, that he desires to be troubled for it as little as may be, and no longer than needs must: And none surely are more unlikely to find acceptance with God, than those who deal so nearly, and endeavour to drive so hard a bargain with him.

And therefore I shall only say this in general, concerning the degrees of our Sorrow for Sin; that Sin being so great an evil in it self, and of so pernicious a consequence to us, it cannot be too much lamented and grieved for by us: And the more and greater our Sins have been, and the longer we have continued and lived in them, they call for so much the greater Sor-

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row, and deeper humiliation from us: For the reasoning of our Saviour concerning *Mary Magdalene*, *She loved much, because much was forgiven her*, is proportionably true in this case, those who have sinned much, should sorrow the more.

And then we must take this Caution along with us, that if we would judge aright of the truth of our Sorrow for Sin, we must not measure it so much by the Degrees of sensible trouble and affliction as by the rational Effects of it, which are hatred of Sin, and a fixt purpose and resolution against it for the future: for he is most truly sorry for his Miscarriage, who looks upon what he hath done amiss, with abhorrence and detestation of the thing, and wisheth he had not done it, and censures himself severely for it, and thereupon resolves not to do the like again. And this is the Character which *St. Paul* gives of a Godly Sorrow, *2 Cor. 7. 10.* that *it worketh repentance*, *μετάνοιαν*, it produceth a real change in our minds, and makes us to alter our purpose and resolution: And tho' such a Person may not be so passionately

onately and sensibly afflicted for Sin, yet it appears by the Effect, that he hath a deeper and more rational resentment of the evil of it, than that man who is sad and melancholy and drooping for never so long a time, and after all returns to his former sinful course; the Degree of his Sorrow may appear greater, but the Effect of it is really less.

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IV. As for the outward expressions of our Grief and Sorrow. The usual sign and outward expression of Sorrow is Tears; but these being not the Substance of our Duty, but an external Testimony of it, which some tempers are more unapt to, than others; we are much less to judge of the Truth of our Sorrow for Sin by these, than by our inward sensible Trouble and Affliction of Spirit. Some Persons are of a more tender and melting disposition, and can command their Tears upon a little occasion, and upon very short warning; and such Persons that can weep for every thing else that troubles them, have much more reason to suspect the Truth of their Sorrow for Sin, if this outward expression of it

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be wanting. And we find in Scripture, that the Sorrow of true Penitents does very frequently discover it self by this outward sign of it. Thus when *Ezra* and the people made confession of their Sins to God, it is said, that *they wept very sore*, *Ezra 10.* *Peter* when he reflected upon that great Sin of denying his Master, 'tis said, *He went forth and wept bitterly.* *David* also was abundant in this expression of his grief. In the Book of *Psalms* he speaks frequently of his sighs, and groans, and of *watering his couch with his tears*: yea so sensibly was he affected with the Evil of Sin, that he could shed tears plentifully for the Sins of others, *Psal. 119. 136. Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because men keep not thy law.* In like manner *Jeremiah* tells us, that *his Soul did weep in secret places, for the pride and obstinacy of the Jews*; that *his eye did weep sore, and run down with tears*; *Jer. 13. 17.* And so likewise *St. Paul*, *Philip. 3. 18, 19.* *There are many that walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies to the Cross of Christ.* And there seems to be this natural Reason for it, that all great and permanent

manent impressions upon the Mind, all deep inward resentments have usually a proportionable effect upon the Body, and the inferiour Faculties.

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But tho' this happen very frequently, yet it is not so constant and certain: For all men have not the same tenderness of Spirit, nor are equally prone to tears; nay tho' a Man can weep upon natural accounts, as upon the loss of a Child or near Relation, or an intimate Friend, or when he lyes under a sharp Bodily pain, yet a Man may truly repent, tho he cannot express his Sorrow for Sin the same way, provided he give Testimony of it by more real Effects: And therefore the Rule, which is commonly given by Casuists in this case, seems to be more ensnaring, than true and useful; namely, "That that man that can shed
" Tears upon account of any evil less
" than that of Sin, (as certainly all natural evils are) ought to question
" the Trnth of his Repentance for any
" Sin that he hath committed, if he
" cannot shed Tears for it. This I think is not true, because there is scarce any Man, of so hard and unrelenting a Spirit,

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Spirit, but the loss of a kind Father, or a dear Child, or other near Relation, will force Tears from him: And yet such a Man, if it were to save his Soul, may not be able at some times to shed a Tear for his Sins. And the Reason is obvious; because Tears do proceed from a sensitive trouble, and are commonly the Product of a natural affection; and therefore 'tis no wonder, if they flow more readily and easily upon a natural account; because they are the Effect of a Cause suitable to their Nature. But Sorrow for Sin, which hath more of the Judgment and Understanding in it, hath not its Foundation in natural Affection, but in Reason; and therefore may not many times express it self in Tears, tho it may produce greater and more proper Effects.

So that upon the whole matter, I see no reason to call in question the Truth and Sincerity of that Man's Sorrow and Repentance, who hates Sin and forsakes it, and returns to God and his Duty, tho he cannot shed Tears, and express the bitterness of his Soul for his Sin, by the same significations that a Mother doth in the loss

loss of her only Son. He that cannot weep like a Child may resolve like a Man, and that undoubtedly will find acceptance with God. A learned Divine hath well illustrated this Matter by this Similitude. Two Persons walking together espy a Serpent, the one shrieks and cries out at the sight of it, the other kills it: So is it in Sorrow for Sin; some express it by great Lamentation and Tears, and vehement transports of passion; others by greater and more real effects of hatred and detestation, by forsaking their Sins, and by mortifying and subduing their Lusts: But he that kills it does certainly best express his inward displeasure and enmity against it.

The Application I shall make of what hath been said upon this Argument, shall be in *two* particulars.

I. By way of Caution, and that against a double mistake about Sorrow for Sin.

1. Some look upon Trouble and Sorrow for Sin, as the whole of Repentance.

2. Others

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2. Others exact from themselves such a degree of Sorrow, as ends in melancholy, and renders them unfit both for the Duties of Religion, and of their particular Calling. The first concerns almost the generality of men; the latter but a very few in comparison.

1. There are a great many, who look upon Trouble and Sorrow for their Sins, as the whole of Repentance, whereas it is but an Introduction to it. It is that which *works repentance*; but is not Repentance it self. Repentance is always accompanied with Sorrow for Sin; but Sorrow for Sin does not always end in true Repentance: Sorrow only respects Sins past; but Repentance is chiefly preventive of Sin for the future. And God doth therefore require our Sorrow for Sin, in order to our forsaking of it. *Heb. 6. 1.* Repentance is there call'd *repentance from dead Works*. It is not only a Sorrow for them, but a turning from them.

There

There is no Reason why men should be so willing to deceive themselves, for they are like to be the losers by it: But so we see it is, that many men are contented to be deceived to their own ruin; and among many other ways, which men have to cheat themselves, this is none of the least frequent, to think that if they can but shed a few tears for Sin upon a death-bed, which no doubt they may easily do, when they see their Friends weeping about them, and apprehend themselves to be in imminent danger, not only of Death, but of that which is more terrible, the heavy Displeasure, and the fiery Indignation of Almighty God, *into whose hands it is a fearful thing to fall*; I say, they think that if they can but do thus much, God will accept this for a true Repentance, and hereupon grant them Pardon and eternal life. And upon these fond hopes, they adjourn their Repentance, and the Reformation of their lives to a dying hour.

Indeed if I were to speak to a Man upon his Death-bed, I would encourage

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rage him to a great Contrition and Sorrow for his Sins, as his last and only remedy, and the best thing he can do at that time; but on the other hand, when I am speaking to those that are well and in health, I dare not give them the least Encouragement to venture their Souls upon this, because it is an hazardous, and almost desperate remedy; especially when men have cunningly and designedly contriv'd to rob God of the Service of their lives, and to put him off with a few unprofitable Sighs and Tears at their departure out of the World. Our Saviour tells us, that it is *not every one, that shall say unto him Lord! Lord! that shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*; and that there is a time, when *many shall seek to enter in, but shall not be able.*

The Sum of this Caution is, that men should take heed of mistaking Sorrow for Sin, for true Repentance, unless it be followed with the forsaking of Sin and the real Reformation of our Lives. *Ahab* humbled himself, but we do not find that he was a true Penitent. *Judas* was sorry for his Sin,
and

and yet for all that was *the Son of perdition*. *Esau* is a sad type of an ineffectual Sorrow for Sin, *Heb. 12.* where the Apostle tells us, that *He found no place for Repentance*, that is no way to change the mind of his Father *Isaac*, *tho he sought it carefully with tears*. If Sorrow for Sin were Repentance, there would be store of Penitents in Hell; for there is the deepest and most intense sorrow, *weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth*.

Serm. 3.

2. Another mistake which Men ought to be caution'd against in this Matter, is of those who exact from themselves such a degree of Sorrow for Sin, as ends in deep melancholy, as renders them unfit both for the Duties of Religion, and of their particular Callings. But because there are but very few who fall into this mistake, I shall need to say the less to it. This only I shall say, that those who indulge their sorrow to such a degree, as to drown their Spirits, and to sink them into melancholy and mopishness, and thereby render themselves unserviceable

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viceable to God, and unfit for the necessities of this life, they commit one Sin more to mourn for, and overthrow the End of Repentance by the indiscreet use of the Means of it. For the End of Sorrow for Sin, is the forsaking of it, and returning to our Duty: But he that sorrows for Sin, so as to unfit him for his Duty, defeats his own design, and destroys the end he aims at.

II. The Other part of the Application of this Discourse should be, to stir up this affection of Sorrow in us. And here, if I had time, I might represent to you the great evil of sin, and the infinite Danger and Inconvenience of it. If the holy men in Scripture, *David*, and *Jeremiah*, and *St. Paul*, were so deeply affected with the sins of others, as to shed *rivers of tears* at the remembrance of them; how ought we to be touched with the sense of our own sins, who are equally concerned in the dishonour brought to God by them, and infinitely more in the danger they expose us to! Can we weep for our dead

dead Friends? and have we no sense of that heavy load of Guilt, of that *body of death*, which we carry about with us? Can we be sad and melancholy for temporal Losses and Sufferings, and *refuse to be comforted*? And is it no Trouble to us to have lost Heaven and Happiness, and to be in continual danger of the intolerable Sufferings, and endless Torments of another World?

I shall only offer to your Consideration, the great Benefit and Advantage which will redound to us from this godly Sorrow; *it worketh Repentance to Salvation, not to be repented of*, saith St. Paul. If we would thus *sow in Tears*, we should *reap in Joy*. This Sorrow would but *continue for a time*, and *in the morning* of the Resurrection there would be Joy to all Eternity, Joy *unpeakable and full of Glory*. It is but a very little while, and these *days of Mourning* will be *accomplish'd*; and then all Tears shall be wiped from our Eyes; and the *ransomed of the Lord* shall come to Sion, with Songs, and

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everlasting Joy shall be upon their Heads. They shall obtain Joy and Gladness, and Sorrow and Sighing shall flee away. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted: but wo unto you that laugh, for ye shall mourn and weep. If Men will rejoice in the pleasures of Sin, and walk in the ways of their hearts, and in the sight of their eyes; if they will remove Sorrow from their heart, and put away all sad and melancholy Thoughts from them, and are resolved to harden their Spirits against the sense of Sin, against the Checks and Convictions of their own Consciences, and the Suggestions of God's Holy Spirit, against all the Arguments that God can offer, and all the Methods that God can use to bring them to Repentance; let them know, that for all these things God will bring them into judgment; and because they would not give way to a timely and seasonable Sorrow for Sin, they shall lye down in eternal Sorrow, weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth shall be their portion for ever. From which sad and miserable Estate,

for our Sins.

99

state, beyond all Imagination, and
past all Remedy, God of his infi-
nite Goodness deliver us all, for Je-
sus Christ his sake,

Serm. 3.

To whom, &c.

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SERMON IV.

Preach'd on *Asb-Wednesday*, 1689.

The unprofitableness of Sin in this
Life, an Argument for Repen-
tance.

JOB XXXIII. 27, 28.

*He looketh upon men, and if any say, I
have sinned, and perverted that which
was right, and it profited me not; He
will deliver his soul from going into the
pit, and his life shall see the light.*

THE great Folly and Perverseness
of humane Nature is in nothing
more apparent than in this, that
when in all other things Men are ge-
nerally

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nerally led and governed by their Interests, and can hardly be imposed upon by any Art, or perswaded by any Solicitation, to act plainly contrary to it; yet in matter of their Sin and Duty, that is, in that which of all other is of greatest concernment to them, they have little or no regard to it; but are so blinded and bewitched with *the deceitfulness of sin*, as not to consider the infinite Danger and Disadvantage of it; and at the same time, to cast the Commandments of God, and the consideration of their own Happiness behind their backs.

And of this every Sinner, when *he comes to himself*, and considers what he hath done, is abundantly convinced; as appears by the Confession and Acknowledgment, which is here in the Text put into the Mouth of a true Penitent; *I have sinned, and perverted that which is right, and it profited me not, &c.*

In which Words here is a great Blessing and Benefit promised on God's part, and the Condition required on our part.

First,

First, The Blessing or Benefit promised on God's part, which is Deliverance from the ill Consequences and Punishment of Sin; *he will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light*, that is, he will deliver him from Death and Damnation. And tho perhaps temporal Death be here immediately intended, yet that is a Type of our Deliverance from eternal Death; which is expressly promised in the Gospel.

Secondly, Here is the Condition required on our part; *If any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not*. In which Words there are contained,

I. A penitent Confession of our Sins to God; for *he looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned*, that is, make a penitent Confession of his Sin to God.

II. A true Contrition for our Sin, not only for fear of the pernicious Consequences of Sin, and the Punishment that will follow it, implied in these
H 4 Words,

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Words, *and it profited me not*, this is but a very imperfect Contrition; but from a just sense of the evil nature of Sin, and the Fault and Offence of it against God, that we have done contrary to Right and our Duty. *If any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right.* Here you see that true and perfect Contrition for our Sins, is made a necessary Condition of the Blessing and Benefit here promised, *viz.* Deliverance from the Punishment due to them.

III. Here is a description of the evil nature of Sin, it is *a perverting of that which is right.* Sin is a perverting of the Constitution and Appointment of God, and of the Nature and Order of Things. God hath given Man a Law and Rule to walk by, but *the foolishness of man perverteth his way.* The great Lines of our Duty are plain and visible to all Men; and if we would attend to the direction of our own Minds, concerning Good and Evil, every Man would be *a law to himself.* *He that sheweth thee, O man, what is good.* That which is right and just and good, is plain and obvious, and offers

offers it self first to us; and whenever we sin, we go out of the right way that lies plain before us, and *turn aside into crooked paths*. But when we do that which is right, we act agreeably to the Design and Frame of our Beings, and comply with the true Nature and Order of Things; we do what becomes us, and are what we ought to be: but Sin perverts the Nature of Things, and puts them out of course; *I have sinned and perverted that which was right*.

IV. You have here an acknowledgment of the Mischievous and Pernicious Consequences of Sin; *I have sinned and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not*. Which last words are a *μειωσις*, in which much less is said than is meant and intended; *It profited me not*, that is, it was so far from being of advantage, that the Effects and Consequences of it were very Pernicious and Destructive.

And this is not only true as to the final issue, and event of an Evil course in the other World; but I shall endeavour to shew, that even in respect
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of this World, and the present Life, the Practice of some sins is plainly mischievous to the temporal Interests of men; that others are wholly unprofitable; and that those which pretend to bring some benefit and advantage, will, when all accounts are cast up, and all circumstances duly weighed and considered, be found to do far otherwise.

First, I shall shew, that the Practice of some Vices is evidently Mischievous and Prejudicial to us, as to this World; as all those Vices which fall under the cognizance of Human Laws, and are punished by them; Murder, Theft, Perjury, Sedition, Rebellion and the like; these cannot be denied to be of pernicious consequence to men, and therefore the great Patrons of Vice seldom plead for these, the inconvenience of them is so palpable, that some feel it, and all may see it every day.

But besides these, there are many other sorts of sin, which human Laws either take no notice of, or do not so severely punish, which yet in their Natural

Natural Consequences, are very pernicious to our present interest; either they are a disturbance to our minds, or dangerous to our health, or ruinous to our Estate, or hurtful to our Reputation, or it may be at once prejudicial to us, in all, or most of these respects; and these are the greatest temporal inconveniences that men are liable to.

All irregular Passions, as Wrath, Malice, Envy, Impatience and Revenge, are not only a disturbance to our selves, but they naturally draw upon us hatred and contempt from others. Any one of these passions is enough to render a Man uneasy to himself, and to make his Conversation disgustful and troublesome to all that are about him; for all men naturally hate all those, who are of an envious, or malicious, or revengeful temper, and are apt to rise up and stand upon their guard against them. Anger and Impatience are great deformities of the mind, and make a Man look as ugly, as if he had a wry and distorted Countenance; and these passions are apt to breed in others a secret contempt of us

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us, and to bring our prudence into question, because they are signs of a weak and impotent mind, that either hath lost, or never had the Government of it self.

There are other Vices, which are plainly pernicious to our health, and do naturally bring Pains and Diseases upon men; such are Intemperance and Lust: and tho' some may pretend to govern themselves, in the Practice of these, with so much moderation and discretion, as to prevent the notorious bad consequences of them, yet there are very few or none that do so; this is seldom more than a Speculation, and men that allow themselves in any lewd or intemperate course, will find it very hard to govern themselves in it; for after men have forfeited their innocence, and broke in upon their natural Modesty, they are apt by degrees to grow profligate and desperate. If a Man gives way but little to his own vicious inclinations, they will soon get head of him, and no Man knows how far they will hurry him at lust.

Besides

Besides that the Vices I am speaking of, Intemperance and Lust, have other great inconveniences attending them, they expose men more frequently, than most other Vices, to occasions of quarrel, in which men often lose their own lives, or take away other mens, by which they fall under the danger of the Law, and the stroke of publick Justice; or if they escape that, (as too often they do) they cannot fly from their own Consciences, which do commonly fill them with the horror and torment of such an action all their days; so pernicious are the usual Consequences of these Vices, of which we see sad instances every day.

Nor are these Vices less hurtful to mens Estates; for they are extreamly expensive and wasteful, and usually make Men careless of all their business and concernments, liable to be cheated by those, whom they are forced to trust with their affairs, because they will not mind them themselves, and to be abused by crafty men, who watch the opportunities of their folly and weakness, to draw them into foolish

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foolish bargains. It is an old Observation, that more men perish by Intemperance, than by the Sword; and I believe it is as true, that more Estates are dissipated and wasted by these two riotous Vices, than by all other Accidents whatsoever.

And there is scarce any notorious Vice, by which men do not greatly suffer in their Reputation and good Name, even when the times are worst and most degenerate; any wicked course, whether of debauchery or injustice, is a blemish to a Man's credit, not only in the esteem of the Sober and Virtuous, but even of those who are loose and extravagant; for men are sooner brought to practise what is bad, than to approve of it, and do generally think all sin and wickedness to be a stain upon them, whatever in a swaggering humor they may say to the contrary. A clear evidence of this is, that men do so studiously endeavour to conceal their Vices, and are so careful that as few as may be should be conscious to them, and are so confounded if they be discovered, and so out of all patience when they

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are upbraided with them; a plain acknowledgment, that these things are shameful in themselves, and whatever face men may put upon things, that they do inwardly and at the bottom of their Hearts believe, that these Practices are deservedly of bad Reputation, and do, in the general opinion of Mankind, leave a blot upon them.

Secondly, There are other sins, which tho' they are not usually attended with Consequences so palpably mischievous, yet are plainly unprofitable, and bring no manner of advantage to men.

Of this sort is all kind of Prophane-ness, and customary Swearing in common Conversation, there is neither profit nor pleasure in them. What doth the Profane Man get by his contempt of Religion? He is neither more respected nor better trusted for this quality; but on the contrary, it is many times really to his prejudice, and brings a great odium upon him, not only from those who sincerely love Religion, but from others also; tho'

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tho' they are conscious to themselves, that they do not love Religion as they ought, yet they have a Veneration for it, and cannot endure that any one should speak slightly of it.

And 'tis as hard to imagine, where the pleasure of Profaneness lies. Men cannot but at first have a great reluctancy in their minds against it, and must offer considerable violence to themselves, to bring themselves to it; and when it is grown more familiar, and their Consciences are become more fear'd and insensible, yet whenever they are alone and serious, or when any affliction or calamity is upon them, they are full of fears and anguish, their guilt stares them in the face, and their Consciences are raging and furious.

And as all kind of Profaneness is unprofitable, so more especially customary swearing in ordinary Conversation, upon every occasion of passion, or any other trivial cause, nay it may be without cause, out of mere habit and custom. Now what can possibly be imagined to be the profit or pleasure

sure of this Vice! Sensual pleasure in it there can be none, because it is not founded in the temper of the Body: a Man may be naturally prone to Anger or Lust; but no Man I think is born with a swearing Constitution.

And there is as little Profit as Pleasure in it; for the common and trivial use of Oaths makes them perfectly insignificant to their end, and is so far from giving credit to a man's word, that it rather weakens the Reputation of it.

Thirdly, Those Vices which pretend to be of advantage to us, when all Accounts are cast up, and all Circumstances duly consider'd, will be found to be quite otherwise. Some Vices pretend to bring in profit, others to yield pleasure; but upon a thorow examination of the matter, these pretences will vanish and come to nothing.

The Vices which pretend to be most profitable are Covetousness and Oppression, Fraud and Falshood, and Perfidiousness: but if we look well
I into

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into them, we shall find that either they do not bring the Advantages they pretended to bring; or that the inconveniences which attend them are as great or greater, than the Advantages they bring; or else that the Practice of the opposite Virtues would be of much greater Advantage to us.

1. Some of these Vices do not bring the Advantages they pretend to do. Covetousness may increase a Man's Estate, but it adds nothing to his Happiness and Contentment; for tho' his Estate grow never so much, his want is still as great as it was before, and his care and trouble continually greater; so that so long as he continues Covetous, the more Rich, the less Happy.

And then for Fraud and Falshood; they are not of that real and lasting Advantage, that cunning but short-sighted men are apt to imagine. Nothing is truer than *that of Solomon, The lying tongue is but for a moment.* A Man can practise the Arts of Falshood and Deceit but for a little while,
before

before they will be discovered ; and when they are discovered, they are so far from being any Advantage to him, that they turn to his prejudice, and the cunning Man begins to be in a bad case, and he that was wont to overreach others, is at last caught himself.

2. Several of these Vices are attended with Inconveniences, as great or greater than the Advantages they bring. If a Man increase his Estate by Injustice and Oppression, yet he loseth his Reputation. Besides that all fraudulent and unjust courses are apt to entangle a Man in a great many Inconveniences, and to expose him to troublesome Suits, for the keeping of what he hath unjustly gotten ; it is very often seen, that what is gotten by Injustice is spent in Law ; and tho' it may be those whom he hath wronged never recover their right, yet first or last the unjust Man is put to more trouble and vexation about it, than the thing is worth. This Solomon observes, *Prov. 15. 16. In the revenue of the wicked there is trouble.*

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The perfidious Man by betraying a Friend or a Trust, may perhaps make some present Advantage: but then by such a Villany he makes himself odious to all Mankind, and by this means, at one time or other, prevents himself of greater advantages which he might have had another way; and perhaps at last is miserably crush'd by those whom he betrayed, who in the change and revolution of human affairs, may some time or other have the opportunity of being revenged. Or else,

3. The Practice of the opposite Virtues would be of far greater Advantage to us.

Truth and Fidelity are in common experience found to be a better and surer way of thriving, and more like to last and hold out, than Fraud and Falshood; and as Honesty is a surer way of raising an Estate, so it brings along with it greater security of the quiet enjoyment of it. There is never any real occasion, and seldom any colour and pretence of bringing such a

Man

Man into trouble; for which reason Solomon says, *Better is the little which the righteous Man hath, than great possessions without right*: because, tho' it be but little, yet it will wear like Steel, and he is like to enjoy it quietly, and may increase it; whereas the unjust Man is continually in danger of losing what he hath gotten.

And if this be the case, it is very plain, that those Vices which pretend to bring the greatest Advantage, are really unprofitable; and to these kind of Vices the Text seems to point more particularly; *If any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not, &c.*

But perhaps tho' there be no profit in any sinful course, yet there may be some *pleasure*. That comes next to be examined; and I doubt not to make it evident, that there is no such pleasure in Sin, as can make it a reasonable Temptation to any Man to venture upon it. The Vices which pretend to bring the greatest pleasure, are Lewdness, and Intemperance, and Revenge.


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The *two* first of these are the highest Pretenders to Pleasure: but God knows, and the sinner himself knows, how thin and transitory this pleasure is, how much trouble attends it, and how many sighs and groans follow it; and whatever pleasure they may minister to the sense, they bring a great deal of anguish and perplexity to the mind; so that the trouble which they cause, does more than counter-vail the pleasure which they bring: and they do not only disturb the Mind, but they disease the Body. How many are there, who for the gratifying of an inordinate Lust, and for the incomprehensible pleasure of a drunken fit, have endured the violent burnings of a Fever, or else have consumed the remainder of their days in languishing sickness and pain?

And the reason of all this is plain, because all the pleasures of sin are violent, and forced, and unnatural, and therefore not like to continue; they are founded in some Disease and Distemper of our minds, and therefore

fore always end in pain and smart.

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Serm.4.

And as for Revenge; it is indeed a very eager and impatient desire: but so far surely from being a pleasure, that the very thoughts of it are extremely troublesome, and raise as great storms in the mind of a Man, as any passion whatsoever: and I never heard of the pleasure of being in a Storm; it is pleasant indeed to be out of it, when others are in it. And when Revenge hath satisfied it self, and laid its enemy bleeding at its foot, the Man that executed it commonly repents himself the next moment, and would give all the World to undo what he hath done; so that if there be any pleasure in Revenge, it is so fitting and of so short a continuance, that we know not where to fix it; for there is nothing but tumult and rage before the execution of it, and after it nothing but remorse and horror; so that if it be a pleasure, it is but of one moment's continuance, and lasts no longer than the act is a doing; and what Man in his wits would purchase so short a pleasure at so



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dear a price? This is most certainly true, and if it were well considered, sufficient to convince any reasonable Man of the unreasonableness of this passion.

*Cain* is a fearful instance of this kind, who after he had drawn his Brother into the Field, and slain him there, how was he tormented with the guilt of what he had done, and forced to cry out, *my punishment is greater than I can bear*, or (as some Translations render the words) *mine iniquity is greater than that it can be forgiven!* Gen. 4. 13. *From thy face* (says he to God, in the anguish of his Soul) *from thy face shall I be hid, and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass that every one that findeth me shall slay me*, v. 14. Every one that findeth me, how fearful did his guilt make him! When probably there was then but one Man in the World besides himself. And I may say of this sort of men, as St. Jude does of those in his time, Jude v. 11. *Wo unto them, for they have gone in the way of Cain,*  
they

*prove otherwise.*

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they are guilty of his Crime, and his doom shall be theirs.

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Serm.4.

And here I cannot but take notice of a great Evil that grows daily upon us, and therefore deserves with the greatest severity to be discountenanced and punish'd, I mean that of Duels, than which what can be more unchristian? And what can be more unreasonable, than for men upon deliberation, and after the heat of Passion is over, to resolve to sheath their Swords in one anothers Bowels, only for a hasty word? And which is yet more unreasonable, that because two men are angry, and have quarrelled with one another, and will fight it out, that therefore two more, who have no quarrel, no kind of displeasure against one another, must fight too, and kill one another if they can, for no reason, and upon no provocation. These false Rules of Honour will not pass in another World in the highest and greatest Court of Honour, from whence there is no Appeal.

I shall conclude this whole Argument with that excellent saying of *Ca-*
to,

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to, reported in *A Gellius*, *Cogitate eum animis vestris*, &c. “ Consider (says he) “ with your selves, if ye be at any “ trouble and pain to do a good action, the trouble will be soon over; “ but the pleasure and comfort of “ what ye have done well, abides with “ you all your days: but if to gratifie “ your selves, you do any thing that “ is wicked, the pleasure will quickly vanish; but the guilt of it will “ stick by you for ever.

And is it not then much better to prevent all this trouble, by denying our selves these sinful pleasures, which will follow us with guilt whilst we live, and fill us with horror and despair when we come to die?

I shall now make some reflections upon what has been delivered, and so conclude.

First, What hath been said upon this Argument, ought particularly to move those who have so great a consideration of this present Life, and the temporal Happiness of it, that the Practice of all Virtues is a friend to their

their temporal, as well as eternal welfare, and all Vice is an Enemy to both.

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Serm. 4.

*Secondly*, This likewise takes off all manner of excuse from Sin and Vice. It pretends not to serve the Soul, and to profit our future Happiness in another World; and if it be an Enemy also to our present welfare in this world, what is there to be said for it?

*Thirdly*, (which I desire to insist a little longer upon) all the Arguments which I have used, to convince men of the folly of a wicked course, are so many strong and unanswerable Reasons for Repentance; for when a Man is convinced, that he hath done foolishly, and to his own prejudice, *that he hath sinned, and that it profited him not*, what can he do less, than to be heartily sorry for it, and ashamed of it, and resolved to do better for the future? Nothing surely is more reasonable than Repentance; and yet how hard is it to bring men to it? Either men will mistake the Nature of it, and not do it effectually; or they will delay it, and not do it in time.

Men

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I. Men mistake the Nature of Repentance; and there are *two* great mistakes about it.

1. Of those who make the great force and virtue of it to consist, not so much in the Resolution of the Penitent, as in the Absolution of the Priest. And this the Church of *Rome*, in their Doctrine concerning Repentance, does. For their Sacrament of Penance (as they call it) they make to consist of two parts; the Matter of it, which consists in these three acts of the Penitent, Confession, Contrition, and Satisfaction; and the Form of it, which is the Absolution of the Priest, in which they make the main virtue and force of Repentance to consist; *in quâ præcipuè ipsius vis sita est*, are the very words of the Council of *Trent*. And here is a wide difference betwixt us; for tho' the comfort of the Penitent may in some case consist in the Absolution of the Priest, yet the Virtue and Efficacy of Repentance does not at all consist in it, but wholly in the Contrition and sincere Resolution of the Penitent, as the Scripture every  
where

where declares: and to think otherwise, is of dangerous Consequence; because it encourageth Men to hope for the benefit of Repentance, that is the pardon and forgiveness of their Sins, without having truly repented. And indeed the Council of *Trent* have so framed their Doctrines in this point, that any one may see, that they did not matter how much they abated on the part of the Penitent, provided the Power of the Priest be but advanced, and kept up in its full height.

Serm. 4.

2. The other Mistake is of those, who make Repentance to consist in the bare Resolution of Amendment, tho' it never have its effect; that is, tho' the Sinner either do not what he resolved, or do it only for a fit, and during his present Trouble and Conviction.

There is one case indeed, and but one, wherein a Resolution not brought to effect is available, and that is, when nothing hinders the performance and execution of it, but only want of time and opportunity for it; when the Repentance is sincere, and the

Resolu-



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Resolution real, but the Man is cut off between the actual Reformation which he intended, and which God, who sees things certainly in their Causes, knows would have followed, if the Man had lived to give Demonstration of it. But this is nothing to those who have the opportunity to make good their Resolution, and do not: for, because the resolution which would have been perform'd, had there been time and opportunity, is reckon'd for a true Repentance, and accepted of God as if it had been done; therefore the Resolution which was not brought to effect when there was time and opportunity for it, hath not the nature of true Repentance, nor will it be accepted of God.

I will add but one thing more upon this Head, because I doubt it is not always sufficiently considered; and that is this, That a sincere Resolution of a better course, does imply a Resolution of the means, as well as of the end; he that is truly resolved against any sin, is likewise resolved against the occasions and temptations that would lead and draw him to it; other-

otherwise he hath taken up a rash and foolish Resolution, which he is not like to keep, because he did not resolve upon that which was necessary to the keeping of it. So he that resolves upon any part of his Duty, must likewise resolve upon the means which are necessary to the discharge and performance of it; he that is resolved to be just in his dealing, and to pay his debts, must be diligent in his Calling, and mind his business, because without this he cannot do the other; for nothing can be more vain and fond, than for a Man to pretend that he is resolved upon doing his Duty, when he neglects any thing that is necessary to put him into a capacity, and to further him in the discharge of it. This is, as if a Man should resolve to be well, and yet never take Physick, or be careless in observing the rules which are prescribed in order to his health. So for a Man to resolve against Drunkenness, and yet to run himself upon the temptations which naturally lead to it, by frequenting the Company of Lewd and Intemperate persons, this is, as if a Man should resolve against the Plague, and run into the Pest-house.

What-

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Whatever can reasonably move a Man to be resolved upon any End, will, if his Resolution be wise and honest, determine him as strongly to use the Means which are proper and necessary to that End.

These are the common Mistakes about this matter, which Men are the more willing to run into, because they are loth to be brought to a true Repentance; the Nature whereof is not difficult to be understood, (for nothing in the World is plainer;) only men are always slow to understand what they have no mind to put in practice. But

II. Besides these Mistakes about Repentance, there is another great Mis-carriage in this matter, and that is the delay of Repentance; men are loth to set about it, and therefore they put it upon the last hazard, and resolve then to huddle it up as well as they can: but this certainly is great folly, to be still making more work for Repentance, because it is to create so much needless trouble and vexation to ourselves; 'tis to go on still in playing a foolish part, in hopes to retrieve all by



by an after game; this is extreamly dangerous, because we may certainly sin, but it is not certain we shall repent, our Repentance may be prevented, and we may be cut off in our sins; but if we should have space for it, Repentance may in process of time grow an hundred times more difficult than it is at present.

But if it were much more certain; and more easie than it is, if it were nothing but a hearty Sorrow and Shame for our Sins, and an asking God forgiveness for them, without being put to the trouble of reforming our wicked lives, yet this were great folly, to do those things which will certainly grieve us after we have done them, and put us to shame, and to ask forgiveness for them. It was well said of Old Cato, *ne tu stultus es homuncio, qui malis veniam precari, quam non peccare; thou art a foolish man indeed, who chusest rather to ask forgiveness, than not to offend.*

At the best, Repentance implies a fault; it is an after-Wisdom, which supposeth a Man first to have plaid

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the fool; it is but the best end of a bad business; a hard shift, and a desperate hazard, which a Man that had acted prudently would never have been put to; it is a Plaster after we have dangerously wounded our selves: but certainly it had been much wiser, to have prevented the danger of the wound, and the pain of curing it. A wise Man would not make himself sick if he could, or if he were already so, would not make himself sicker, tho' he had the most Effectual and Infallible Remedy in the world in his power: But this is not the case of a sinner, for Repentance as well as Faith is the gift of God.

Above all, let me caution you, not to put off this great and necessary work, to the most unseasonable time of all other, the time of sickness and death, upon a fond presumption, that you can be reconciled to God when you please, and exercise such a Repentance as will make your peace with him at any time.

I am heartily afraid, that a very great part of Mankind do miscarry upon

upon this confidence, and are swallowed up in the gulf of Eternal Perdition, with this Plank in their Arms. The common Custom is (and I fear it is too common) when the Physician hath given over his Patient, then, and not till then, to send for the Minister; not so much to enquire into the Man's condition, and to give him suitable Advice, as to minister Comfort, and to speak Peace to him at a venture.

But let me tell you, that herein you put an extream difficult task upon us, in expecting that we should pour Wine and Oyl into the wound before it be searched, and speak smooth and comfortable things to a Man, that is but just brought to a sense of the long course of a lewd and wicked Life, impenitently continued in. Alas! what comfort can we give to men in such a case? We are loth to drive them to despair; and yet we must not destroy them by presumption; pity and good nature do strongly tempt us to make the best of their case, and to give them all the little hopes, which with any kind of Reason



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son we can, and God knows it is but very little that we can give to such Persons upon good ground; for it all depends upon the degree and sincerity of their Repentance, which God only knows, and we can but guess at. We can easily tell them what they ought to have done; and what they should do if they were to live longer, and what is the best that they can do in those straits into which they have brought themselves, *viz.* to exercise as deep a Sorrow and Repentance for their sins as is possible, and *to cry mightily to God* for Mercy, in and through the Merit of our Blessed Saviour. But how far this will be available in these Circumstances we cannot tell; because we do not know, whether if the Man had lived longer, this Repentance and these Resolutions which he now declares of a better course, would have been good.

And after all is done that can be done in so short a time, and in such Circumstances of confusion and disorder, as commonly attend dying Persons, I doubt the result of all will be this; that there is much more ground  
of

of fear than hope concerning them; nay perhaps, while we are pressing the dying sinner to Repentance, and he is bungling about it, he expires in great doubt and perplexity of mind what will become of him; or if his Eyes be closed with more comfortable hopes of his condition, the next time he opens them again, he may find his fearful mistake, like the rich Man in the Parable, who when he was *in hell*, *lift up his eyes being in torment*.

This is a very dismal and melancholy consideration, and commands all men presently to repent, and not to put off the main work of their lives to the end of them, and the time of sickness and old Age. Let us not offer up a Carcass to God instead of a living and acceptable Sacrifice: but let us turn to God, in the days of our health and strength, *before the evil days come, and the years draw nigh, of which we shall say we have no pleasure in them; before the Sun and the Moon and the Stars be darkned; as Solomon elegantly expresseth it, Eccl. 12. 1, 2. before all the Comforts of Life be gone, before our Faculties be all ceased and*

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spent, before our Understandings be too weak, and our Wills too strong; our Understanding be too weak for consideration, and the deliberate exercise of Repentance, and our Wills too strong and stiff to be bent and bowed to it.

Let us not deceive our selves, Heaven is not an Hospital made to receive all Sick and Aged Persons, that can but put up a faint request to be admitted there; no, no, they are never like to *see the Kingdom of God*, who instead of *seeking it in the first place*, make it their *last refuge and retreat*; and when they find the Sentence of Death upon them, only to avoid present Execution, do bethink themselves of getting to Heaven, and since there is no other Remedy, are contented to petition the great King and Judge of the World, that they may be *transported* thither.

Upon all these Considerations, let us use no delay in a matter of such mighty consequence to our eternal Happiness, but let the *counsel* which was given to *Nebuchadnezzar* be *acceptable to us*; let us *break off our sins by righteousness*, and our iniquities by *shewing mercy*



to the poor ; if so be it may be a lengthening of our tranquillity. Repentance and Alms do well together ; let us break off our sins by righteousness, and our iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor ; especially upon this great occasion, which his Majesty's great Goodness to those distressed Strangers, that have taken Sanctuary among us, hath lately presented us withal, remembering that we also are in the body, and liable to the like sufferings ; and considering on the one hand, that Gracious promise of our Lord, *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy* ; and on the other hand, that terrible threatning in St. James, *He shall have Judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy.*

To conclude, from all that hath been said, let us take up a present Resolution of a better course, and enter immediately upon it, to day whilst it is called to day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. O that men were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end ! And grant we beseech thee Almighty God, that we may all know and do, in this our day, the things which belong to our peace,

Vol. 8. for thy mercy's sake in Jesus Christ, To  
whom with thee O Father, and the Holy  
Ghost, be all Honour and Glory now and  
for ever. Amen.

SER.

# SERMON V.

The Shamefulness of Sin, an Argument for Repentance.

The First Sermon on this Text.

ROM. VI. 21, 22.

*What fruit had ye then in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become Servants to God, ye have your fruit unto Holiness, and the end Everlasting Life.*

**T**H E R E are two Passions which do always in some Degree or other accompany a true Repentance, viz. Sorrow and Shame for our Sins; because



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because these are necessary to engage men to a Resolution of making that change wherein Repentance does consist: For till we are heartily sorry for what we have done, and ashamed of the evil of it, it is not likely that we should ever come to a firm and steady purpose of forsaking our evil ways, and betaking our selves to a better course.

And these two Passions of Sorrow and Shame for our Sins, were wont anciently to be signified by those outward expressions of Humiliation and Repentance, which we find so frequently mentioned in Scripture, of *being clothed in Sackcloth* as a testimony of our sorrow and mourning for our Sins, and of *being sprinkled upon the head, and covered over with filth and dirt, with dust and ashes*, in token of our shame and confusion of Face for all our Iniquities and Transgressions. Hence are those Expressions in Scripture of *Repenting in Sackcloth and Ashes, of lying down in our shame, and being cover'd with confusion*, in token of their great sorrow and shame for the manifold

manifest and heinous Sins, which they had been guilty of.

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Serm. 5.

Of the former of these, *viz.* Trouble and Sorrow for our Sins, I have very lately \* treated; and of the latter, I intend now by God's assistance to speak, *viz.* Shame for our Sins, and that from these Words which I have recited to you; *What fruit had ye then in those things?* &c. In which Words the Apostle makes a comparison between an Holy and Virtuous, and a Sinful and Vicious course of Life, and sets before us a perfect enumeration of the manifest inconveniences of the one, and the manifold Advantages of the other.

\* Ser. 3.

*First,* The manifest Inconveniences of a Vicious and Sinful course; and the Apostle mentions these *three*.

I. It is unprofitable, it brings no manner of present Benefit and Advantage to us, if all things be rightly calculated and consider'd. *What fruit had ye then in those things? Then (i. e.)* at the time when you committed those Sins, had you any present Advantage by

Vol. 8. by them? No, certainly; but quite contrary.

II. The reflection upon our Sins afterwards is cause of shame and confusion to us; *What fruit had you then in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed?*

III. The final issue and consequence of these things is very dismal and miserable; *The end of those things is death.* Let us put these things together, and see what they amount to: No Fruit then when ye did these things, and shame now when ye come afterwards to reflect upon them, and death and misery at the last.

*Secondly,* Here is likewise on the other hand represented to us the manifold Benefit of an Holy and Virtuous Life. And that upon these two accounts.

I. Of the present Benefit of it, which the Apostle calls here, *fruit*; *Ye have your fruit unto Holiness.*

II. In



II. In respect of the future Reward of it; *And the end Everlasting Life.* Here is a considerable Earnest in hand, and a mighty Recompence afterwards, infinitely beyond the proportion of our best Actions and Services, both in respect of the greatness and the duration of it, *Everlasting Life*; for a few transient and very imperfect actions of obedience, a perfect and immutable and endless state of Happiness. I shall begin with the

*First* of the *two* general Heads, *viz.* The manifest Inconveniences of a Sinful and Vicious course; and the Apostle I told you in the Text takes notice of *three*.

I. It is unprofitable, and if all things be rightly calculated and consider'd, it brings no manner of present Advantage and Benefit to us. *What fruit had ye then in those things? Then (i. e.)* When ye committed those Sins, had you any present Advantage by them? No certainly, quite the contrary; as if the Apostle had said, if you seriously reflect upon your former course of

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of Impiety and Sin, wherein you have continued so long, you cannot but acknowledge that it brought no manner of advantage to you; and when all accounts are truly cast up, you must, if you will confess the Truth, own that you were in no sort gainers by it: For the words are a *μῦθος*, and the Apostle plainly intends more than he expresseth, *What fruit had you then in those things? (i. e.)* The wicked course which ye formerly lived in, was so far from being any ways Beneficial to you, that it was on the contrary upon all accounts extreamly to your prejudice and disadvantage.

And this is not only true in respect of the final Issue and Consequence of a Sinful and Vicious course of Life, that no man is a gainer by it at the long run; and if we take into our consideration another World, and the dreadful and endless misery which a wicked and impenitent Life will then plunge men into, (which in the farther handling of this Text will at large be spoken to, being the last of the *three* Particulars under this *First* general head :) But it is true likewise, even

even in respect of this World, and with regard only to this present and temporal Life, without looking so far as the future Recompence and Punishment of Sin in another World.

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Serm. 4.

And this would plainly appear, by an Induction of these *three* Particulars.

1. It is evident that some Sins are plainly mischievous to the temporal Interest of men, as tending either to the disturbance of their minds, or the endangering of their Health and Lives, or to the prejudice of their Estates, or the blasting of them in their Reputation and good Name.

2. That there are other Sins, which tho' they are not so visibly burdened and attended with mischievous Consequences, yet are they plainly unprofitable, and bring no manner of real Advantage to men, either in respect of gain or pleasure; such are the Sins of Profaneness, and customary Swearing in common Conversation.

3. That



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3. That even those Sins and Vices, which make the fairest pretence to be of Advantage to us, when all Accounts are cast up, and all Circumstances duly weigh'd and consider'd, will be found to be but pretenders, and in no degree able to perform and make good what they so largely promise before hand, when they tempt us to the commission of them. There are some Vices, which pretend to bring in great profit, and tempt worldly-minded men, whose minds are disposed to catch at that bait; such are the Sins of Covetousness and Oppression, of Fraud and Falshood and Perfidiousness. And there are others which pretend to bring pleasure along with them, which is almost an irresistible temptation to voluptuous and sensual men; such are the Sins of Revenge, and Intemperance, and Lust. But upon a particular examination of each of these, it will evidently appear, that there is no such profit or pleasure in any of these Vices, as can be a reasonable temptation to any Man to fall in love with them, and to engage in the Commission and Practice of them. But I shall not now  
inlarge

inlarge upon any of these, having lately discours'd upon them from another Text. I shall therefore proceed to the

Serm. 5.

II. Inconvenience which I mentioned of a sinful and vicious Course, viz. that the reflection upon our Sins afterwards, is cause of great Shame and Confusion to us. *What fruit had you then in those things, whereof you are now ashamed?* And this is a very proper Argument for this Season \*; because the Passion of Shame, as it is the natural and usual consequent of Sin, so it is a Disposition necessarily required to a true Repentance.

\* Preach'd  
in Lent.

Most Men when they commit a known Fault are apt to be ashamed, and ready to blush whenever they are put in mind of it, and charged with it. Some Persons indeed have gone so far in Sin, and have waded so deep in a vicious course, as to be confirmed and harden'd in their Wickedness to that degree, as to be past all Shame, and almost all sense of their Faults; especially in regard of the more common and ordinary Vices,

I. which

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which are in vogue and fashion, and in the commission whereof they are countenanc'd and encourag'd by Company and Example. Such were those of whom the Prophet speaks, Jer. 6. 15. *Were they ashamed, when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not ashamed, neither could they blush.*

But yet even these Persons, when they come to be sensible of their guilt, so as to be brought to Repentance, they cannot then but be ashamed of what they have done. For what face soever Men may set upon their Vices, Sin is shameful in it self, and so apt to fill Men with *confusion of face*, when they seriously reflect upon it, that they cannot harden their Foreheads against all sense of Shame. And whatever Men may declare to the contrary, this is tacitly acknowledged by the generality of Men, in that they are so solicitous and careful to conceal their Faults from the Eyes of others, and to keep them as secret as they can; and whenever they are discovered and laid open, 'tis matter of great Trouble and Confusion to them; and if any one happen to upbraid and

twit



twit them with their Miscarriages of any kind, they cannot bear with Patience to hear of them. *Serm. 5.*

There are indeed some few such Prodigies and Monsters of Men, as are able after great struglings with their Consciences, to force themselves to boast impudently of their Wickedness, and to glory in their shame; not because they do really and inwardly believe their Vices to be an Honour and Glory to them, but because conscious to themselves that they have done shameful things, and believing that others know it, they put on a *Whore's Forehead*, and think to prevent the upbraiding of others, by owning what they have done, and seeming to glory in it: but yet for all that, these Persons, if they would confess the Truth, do feel some Confusion in themselves, and they are inwardly sensible of the Infamy and Reproach of such Actions, for all they would seem to the World to bear it out so well: For when all is done, there is a wide difference between the Impudence of a Criminal, and the Confidence and Assurance of a clear Conscience, that is fully satisfied

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of its own Innocence and Integrity. The conscientious Man is not ashamed of any thing that he hath done: but the impudent Sinner only seems not to be so, but all the while feels a great deal of Confusion in his own Mind. The one is sensible and satisfied that there is no cause for Shame: the other is conscious to himself that there is cause, but he offers Violence to himself, and suppresses all he can the sense and shew of it, and will needs face down the World, that he hath no Guilt and Regret in his own Mind for any thing that he hath done.

Now that Sin is truly matter of Shame, will be very evident, if we consider these *two* things.

*First*, If we consider the nature of this Passion of Shame.

*Secondly*, If we consider what there is in Sin, which gives real ground and occasion for it.

*First*, For the nature of this Passion. Shame is the Trouble or Confusion of Mind, occasioned by something that tends

tendsto our Disgrace and Dishonour, to our Infamy and Reproach. Now there is nothing truly and really matter of Shame and Reproach to us, but what we our selves have done, or have been some way or other accessary to the doing of, by our own fault or neglect, and by consequence what it was in our Power and Choice not to have done: For no Man is ashamed of what he is sure he could not help. Necessity, unless it be wilful and contracted, and happens through some precedent occasion and fault of our own, does take away all just cause of Shame.

And nothing likewise is matter of Shame, but something which we ought not to do, which misbecomes us, and is below the Dignity and Perfection of our Nature, and is against some Duty and Obligation that is upon us to the contrary; and consequently is a Reproach to our Reason and Understanding, a Reflection upon our Prudence, and Discretion, and at first sight hath an appearance of Ruggedness and Deformity.



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And all Actions of this nature do receive several Aggravations, with respect to the Persons against whom, and in whose Presence, and under whose Eye and Knowledge these shameful things are done. Now I shall shew in the

*Second* place, That Sin contains in it whatsoever is justly accounted infamous, together with all the Aggravations of Shame and Reproach that can be imagined. And this will appear by considering Sin and Vice in these *two* respects;

I. In relation to our selves.

II. In respect to God, against whom, and in whose sight it is committed.

I. In relation to our selves, there are these *four* things which make Sin and Vice to be very shameful.

1. The natural Ruggedness and Deformity of it.

2. That

2. That it is so great a Dishonour to our Nature, and to the Dignity and Excellency of our Being.

3. That it is so great a Reproach to our Reason and Understanding, and so foul a Reflection upon our Prudence and Discretion.

4. That it is our own voluntary Act and Choice.

Every one of these Considerations render it very shameful, and all of them together ought to fill the Sinner with *Confusion of face*. I shall speak to them severally.

1. The natural Ruggedness and Deformity of Sin and Vice render it very shameful. Men are apt to be ashamed of any thing in them, or belonging to them, that looks ugly and monstrous, and therefore they endeavour with great Care and Art to conceal and dissemble their Deformity in any kind. How strangely do we see Men concerned with all their Diligence and Skill, to cover and palliate any Defect or De-

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formity in their Bodies; an ill Face, if they could, however a foul and bad Complexion, or blind or squinting Eye, a crooked Body or Limb, and whatever is ill-favour'd or monstrous. Now in regard of our Souls and better part, Sin hath all the monstrousness and deformity in it, which we can imagine in the Body, and much more: and it is as hard to be covered from the Eye of discerning Men, as the deformity of the Body is; but impossible to be conceal'd from the Eye of God, to whom *Darkness and Light*, secret and open are all one. But then the moral Defects and Deformities of the Mind have this advantage above the natural Defects and Deformities of the Body, that the former are possible to be cured by the Grace of God, in conjunction with our own Care and Endeavour: Whereas no Diligence or Skill can ever help or remove many of the natural Defects and Deformities of the Body.

Sin is the blindness of our Minds, the perverseness and crookedness of our Wills, and the monstrous irregularity and disorder of our Affections  
and



and Appetites ; it is the mis-placing of our Powers and Faculties, the setting of our Wills and Passions above our Reason ; all which is ugly and unnatural, and, if we were truly sensible of it, matter of great Shame and Reproach to us.

Serm. 5.

There is hardly any Vice, but at first sight hath an odious and ugly Appearance to a well disciplin'd and innocent Mind, that hath never had any acquaintance with it. And however Familiarity and Custom may abate the sense of its Deformity, yet it is as it was before, and the change that is made in us, does not alter the nature of the thing. Drunkenness and furious Passion, Pride and Falshood, Covetousness and Cruelty, are odious, and matter of Shame, in the sincere and uncorrupted Opinion of all Mankind. And tho a Man, by the frequent practice of any of these Vices, and a long familiarity with them, may not be so sensible of the Deformity of them in himself, yet he quickly discerns the ugliness of them in others, whenever they come in his way, and could with Salt and Sharpness

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ness enough upbraid those whom he sees guilty of them, but that he is inwardly conscious, that the Reproach may be so easily return'd, and thrown back upon himself. However this is a natural acknowledgment of the Deformity and Shamefulness of Sin and Vice.

2. They are likewise shameful, because they are so great a Dishonor to our Nature, and to the Dignity and Excellency of our Being. We go below our selves, and act beneath the Dignity of our Nature, when we do any thing contrary to the Rules and Laws of it, or to the revealed Will of God; because these are the Bounds and Limits which God and Nature hath set to Humane Actions; and are the measures of our Duty, *i. e.* what is fit and becoming for us to do, and what not. So that all Sin and Vice is base and unworthy, and beneath the Dignity of our Nature; it argues a corrupt and diseased Constitution and Habit of Mind, a crooked and perverse Disposition of Will, and a sordid and mean temper of Spirit.

And

And therefore the Scripture doth frequently represent a state of Sin and Wickedness, by that which is accounted the basest and meanest Condition among Men, by a state of Servitude and Slavery, especially if it had been our Choice, or the evident and necessary Consequence of our wilful Fault: For we do as bad as chuse it, when we wilfully bring it upon our selves. So that to be a Sinner, is to be a Slave to some vile Lust, Appetite, or Passion, to some unnatural or irregular Desire; it is to sell our selves into Bondage, and to part with one of the most valuable things in the World, our Liberty, upon low and unworthy terms. Such a State and Condition does unavoidably debase and debauch our Minds, and break the force and firmness of our Spirits, and robs us, as *Dalilah* did *Sampson*, of our Strength and Courage, of our Resolution and Constancy; so that Men have not the Heart left to design and endeavour in good earnest their own Rescue out of this mean and miserable estate, into which by their own Folly and Fault they have brought themselves.

When



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When Men are engaged into a custom of sinning, and have habituated themselves to any vicious Course, how do they betray their Weakness and want of Resolution, by being at the beck of every foolish Lust, and by suffering themselves to be commanded and hurried away by every unruly Appetite and Passion, to do things which they know to be greatly to their Harm and Prejudice, and which they are convinced are mean and sordid things, and such as they are ashamed that any wise Man should see them doing! And there is no greater Argument of a pitiful and degenerate Spirit, than to commit such things as a Man would blush to be surprized in, and would be mightily troubled to hear of afterwards. And which is more, after he hath been convinc'd by manifold Experience, that they are a Shame and Disgrace to him, and make him to hang down his Head, and let fall his Countenance, whenever he is in better Company than himself; yet after this to go and do the same things again, which he is sensible are so shameful, and to be so impotent, and

*with respect to our selves.*

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and to have so little Command of himself, as not to be able to free himself from this Bondage, nor the heart to pray to God that by his Grace he would enable him hereto.

Serm. 5.

And that Sin is of this shameful Nature, is evident, in that the greatest part of Sinners take so much Care and Pains to hide their Vices from the sight and notice of Men, and to this purpose chuse Darknes and secret places of Retirement to commit their Sins in. The Apostle takes notice, that thus much Modesty was left even in a very wicked and degenerate Age, *1 Thes. 5. 7. They that be drunk (says he) are drunk in the night.* Now all this is a plain acknowledgment, that Sin is a spurious and degenerate thing, that it misbecomes Humane Nature, and is below the Dignity of a reasonable Creature: Otherwise why should Men be so solicitous and concern'd to cover their Faults from the sight of others? If they are not ashamed of them, why do they not bring them into the broad Light, and shew them openly, if they think they will endure it?

So

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So true is that Observation which *Plato* makes, That tho a Man were sure that God would forgive his Sins, and that Men should never know them, yet there is that Baseness in Sin, that a wise Man, that considers what it is, would blush to himself alone to be guilty of it; and tho he were not afraid of the Punishment, would be ashamed of the Turpitude and Deformity of it.

Did but a Man consider seriously with himself, how mean and unmanly it is for a Man to be drunk; and what an apish and ridiculous thing he renders himself to all sober Men that behold him, and with what Contempt and Scorn they entertain such a sight; and how brutish it is to wallow in any unlawful Lust, and how much a Man descends and stoops beneath himself; what shameful Fear and Cowardise he betrays when he is frightened to tell a Lye out of Fear, or tempted thereto for some little Advantage; and yet is so inconsistent with himself, as to have, or to pretend to have the Courage to fight any Man,



Man, that shall tell him so sawcy  
a Truth, as that he told a Lye.

Serm. 5.

Would but a Man think before hand, how unworthy, and how unequal a thing it is to defraud or cheat his Brother, or to do any thing to another Man, which he would be loth in the like case that he should do to him; how base a thing it is, for a Man to be perfidious and false to his Promise or Trust; how monstrous to be unthankful to one that hath highly obliged him, and every way and upon all occasions deserved well at his hands; and so I might instance in all other sorts of Sins; I say, he that considers this well and wisely, tho there were no Law against Sin, and (if it were a possible case, and fit to be supposed) tho there were no such Being as God in the World, to call him to account and punish him for it, yet out of meer Generosity and Greatness of Mind, out of pure respect to himself, and the Dignity and Rank of his Being, and of his Order in the World, out of very Reverence to human Nature, and the inward Perswasion of his own Mind, (howe-  
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ver he came by that Perswasion) concerning the Indecency and Deformity and Shamefulness of the thing; I say, for these Reasons, if there were no other, a Man would strive with himself, with all his might, to refrain from Sin and Vice, and not only blush, but abhor to think of doing a wicked Action.

3. Sin will yet farther appear shameful, in that it is so great a Reproach to our Understandings and Reasons, and so foul a Blot upon our Prudence and Discretion. *Omnis peccans aut ignorans est, aut incogitans*, is a Saying, I think, of one of the School-men; (as one would guess by the *Latin* of it) *Every Sinner is either an ignorant, or inconsiderate Person.* Either Men do not understand what they do, when they commit Sin; or if they do know, they do not actually attend to, and consider what they know. Either they are habitually or actually ignorant of what they do: for Sin and Consideration cannot dwell together; 'tis so very unreasonable and absurd a thing, that it requires either gross Ignorance, or stupid Inadvertency, to make

make a Man capable of committing it. Whenever a Man sins, he must either be destitute of Reason, or must lay it aside or asleep for the time, and so suffer himself to be hurried away, and to act *brutishly*, as if *he had no understanding*.

Serm. 5.

Did but Men attentively consider what it is to offend God, and to break the Laws of that great Law-giver, who *is able to save or to destroy*, they would discern so many invincible Objections against the thing, and would be filled with such strong Fears and Jealousies of the fatal Issue and Event of it, that they would not dare to venture upon it. And therefore we find the Scripture so frequently resolving the Wickedness of Men into their Ignorance and Inconsiderateness, *Psal. 14. 4. Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge?* intimating that by their Actions one would judge so. And the same account God himself also gives elsewhere of the frequent Disobedience and Rebellion of the People of *Israel, Deut. 32. 28, 29.*

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*They are a nation void of counsel, neither is there any understanding in them. Oh! that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end! Knowledge and Consideration would cure a great part of the Wickedness that is in the World; Men would not commit Sin with so much greediness, would they but take time to consider, and bethink themselves what they do.*

Have we not reason then to be ashamed of Sin, which casts such a reproach of Ignorance and Rashness upon us? and of Imprudence likewise and Indiscretion? Since nothing can be more directly and plainly against our greatest and best Interest both of Body and Soul, both here and hereafter, both now and to all Eternity. And there is nothing that Men are more ashamed of, than to be guilty of so great an Imprudence, as to act clearly against their own Interest, to which Sin is the most plainly cross and contrary, that it is possible for any thing to be. No Man can  
engage

engage and continue in a sinful Course, without being so far abused and infatuated, as to be contented to part with Everlasting Happiness, and to be undone and miserable for ever; none but he that can perswade himself against all the Reason and Sense of Mankind, that there is pleasure enough in the transient acts of Sin, to make amends for Eternal Sorrow, and Shame, and Suffering. And can such a Thought as this enter into the Heart of a considerate Man? *Epicurus* was so wise, as to conclude against all Pleasure that would give a Man more Trouble and Disturbance afterwards; against all Pleasures that had Pain and Grief consequent upon them: and he forbids his Wise Man to tast of them, or to meddle with them; and had he believed any thing of a future State, he must, according to his Principle, have pronounc'd it the greatest Folly that could be, for any Man to purchase the Pleasures and Happiness of a few Years, at the dear rate of Eternal Mife-

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ry and Torment. So that if it be a Disgrace to a Man to act imprudently, and to do things plainly against his Interest, then Vice is the greatest reproach that is possible.

The 4<sup>th</sup> and last Consideration, which renders Sin so shameful to us, is, that it is our own Voluntary Act and Choice. We chuse this Disgrace, and willingly bring this Reproach upon our selves. We pity an Idiot, and one that is naturally destitute of Understanding, or one that loseth the use of his Reason by a Disease or other inevitable accident: But every one despiseth him who besots himself, and plays the fool out of carelessness and a gross neglect of himself. And this is the Case of the Sinner; there is no Man that sinneth, but because he is wanting to himself; he might be wiser and do better, and will not; but he chuseth his own Devices, and voluntarily runs himself upon those  
incon.



*with respect to our selves.*

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inconveniences, which it was in his Power to have avoided.

Serm. 5.

Not but that I do heartily own and lament the great Corruption and Degeneracy of our Nature, and the strong Propensions which appear so early in us to that which is Evil: but God hath provided a Remedy and Cure for all this: For since *the Grace of God which brings Salvation unto all men, hath appeared,* under the influence and through the assistance of that Grace, which is offered to them by the Gospel, men may *deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World.* For I make no doubt, but since God hath enter'd into a new Covenant of Grace with Mankind, and offered new Terms of Life and Salvation to us, I say I doubt not, but his Grace is ready at hand, to enable us to perform all those Conditions which he requires of us, if we be not wanting to our selves.

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There was a way of Salvation established, before the Gospel was clearly reveal'd to the World; and they who under that Dispensation, whether *Jews* or *Gentiles*, sincerely endeavour'd to do the will of God, so far as they knew it, were not utterly destitute of Divine Grace and Assistance: But now there is a more plentiful Effusion of God's Grace and Holy Spirit; so that whoever under the Gospel sins deliberately, sins wilfully, and is wicked, not for want of Power but of Will to do otherwise. And this is that which makes Sin so shameful a thing, and so very reproachful to us, that we destroy our selves by our own folly and neglect of our selves, and become miserable by our own choice, and when the Grace of God hath put it into our Power to be wise and to be happy.

I should now have proceeded to the *Second* thing I propos'd, which was to consider Sin in relation to God,

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*with respect to our selves.*

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God, and to shew that it is no less  
shameful in that respect, than I have *Serm. 5.*  
shewn it to be with regard to our  
selves: But this I shall refer to ano-  
ther opportunity.

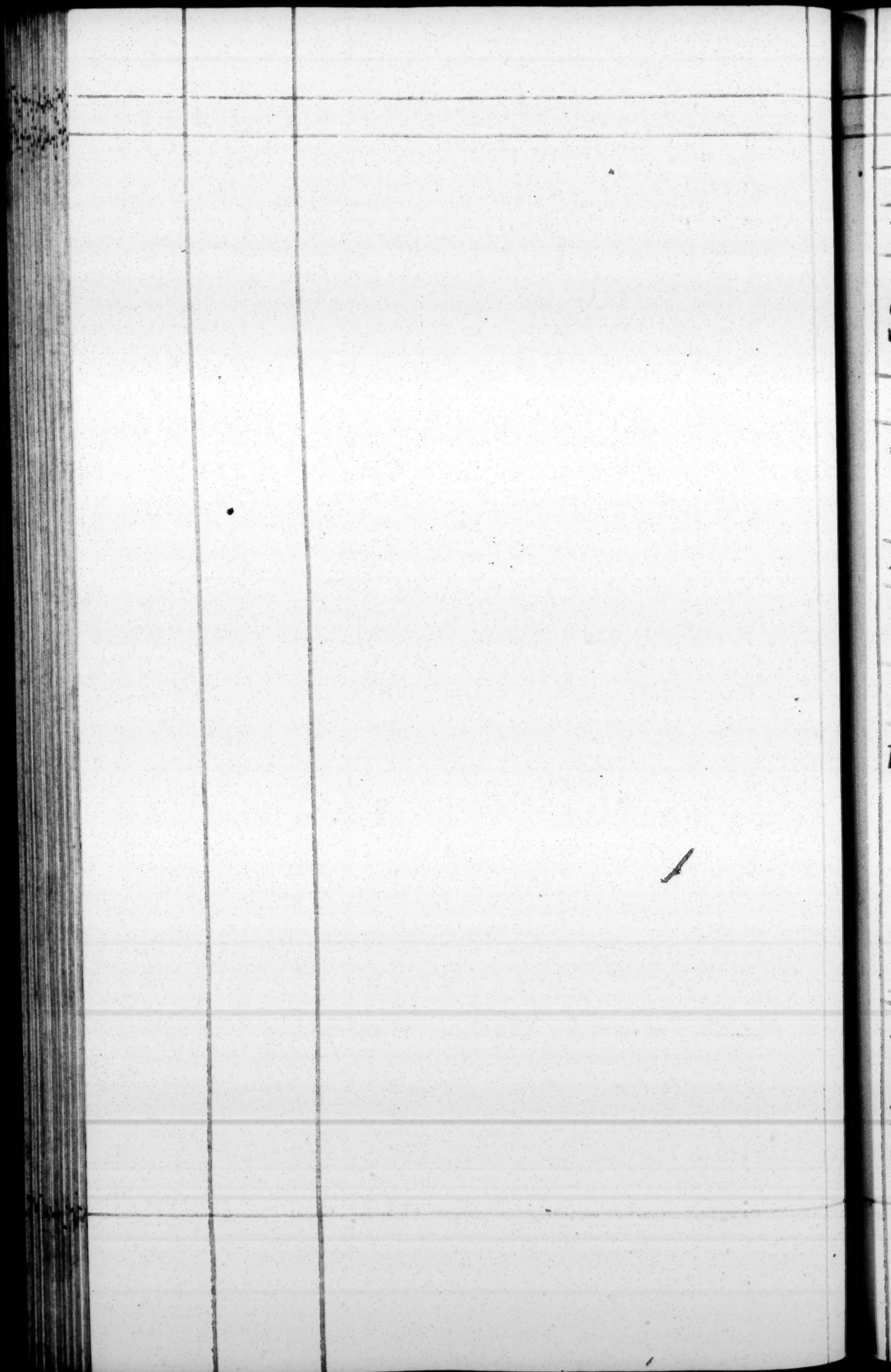
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# SERMON VI.

The Shamefulness of Sin, an Argument for Repentance.

The Second Sermon on this Text.

ROM. VI. 21, 22.

*What fruit had ye then in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become Servants to God, ye have your fruit unto Holiness, and the end Everlasting Life.*

**I**N these words the Apostle makes a comparison, between an Holy and Virtuous, and a Sinful and Vicious course of Life, and sets before us a perfect

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perfect enumeration of the manifest inconveniences of the one, and the manifold advantages of the other.

I began with the *First* of these, viz. to shew the manifest inconveniences of a sinful and vicious course. I am upon the *Second* inconvenience of a sinful course, viz. That the reflection upon it afterwards is cause of great Shame and *Confusion of face* to us ; and that

*First*, in Relation to our selves. Which I have dispatch'd, and proceed now in the

*Second* Place, to consider Sin in respect of God, against whom, and in whose sight and presence it is committed ; and upon examination it will appear to be no less shameful in this respect than the other.

There are some Persons before whom we are more apt to be ashamed and blush, than before others ; as those whom we reverence, those to whom we are greatly oblig'd, and those who are clear of those faults which we are guilty



guilty of; and those who hate or greatly dislike what we do; especially if they be present with us, and in our company; if they stand by us and observe, and take notice of what we do, and are likely to publish our folly and make it known, and have Authority and Power to punish us for our faults; we are ashamed to have done any thing that is vile and unworthy before such Persons. Now to render Sin the more shameful, God may be consider'd by us under all these Notions, and in all these Respects.

1. Whenever we commit any Sin, we do it before him, in his presence, and under his eye and knowledge, to whom of all persons in the world we ought to pay the most profound reverence. I remember *Seneca* somewhere says; that "There are some Persons, *quorum interventu periti quoque homines vitia supprimerent*, that are so awful and so generally reverenc'd for the eminency of their Virtues, that even the most profligate and impudent Sinners will endeavour to suppress their Vices, and refrain from any thing that is notoriously

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“ riously bad, and uncomely, whilst  
“ such Persons stand by them, and are  
“ in Presence. Such an one was *Cato*  
among the *Romans*. The People of  
*Rome* had such a Regard and Reve-  
rence for him, that if he appeared,  
they would not begin or continue  
their usual sports, till he was with-  
drawn from the Theatre, thinking  
them too light to be acted before a  
Person of his Gravity and Virtue: And  
if they were so much aw’d by the pre-  
sence of a Wise and a Virtuous Man,  
that they were ashamed to do any  
thing that was unseemly before him;  
how much more should the Presence of  
the Holy God, who is of *purser eyes*  
*than to behold iniquity*, make us blush to  
do any thing that is lewd and vile in  
his sight, and fill us with shame and  
*confusion of face* at the thoughts of  
it? Now whenever we commit any  
Sin, God looks upon us; and he alone  
is an ample Theatre indeed. That  
he observes what we do, ought to  
be more to us, than if the Eyes of  
all the World besides were gazing  
upon us.

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2. He

*with respect to God.*

  
Serm. 6.

2. He likewise is incomparably our greatest Benefactor, and there is no Person in the World, to whom in any degree we stand so much oblig'd, as to him; and from whom we can expect and hope for so much good, as from him; the consideration whereof must make us ashamed, so often as we consider, and are conscious to our selves, that we have done any thing that is grievous and displeasing to him.

We are wont to have a more peculiar Reverence for those to whom we are exceedingly beholden, and to be much ashamed to do any thing before them, which may signifie disrespect, and much more enmity against them; because this would be horrible ingratitude, one of the most odious and shameful of all Vices. And is there any one to whom we can stand more obliged, than to him that made us, than to the Author and Founder of our Beings, and the great Patron and Preserver of our lives? And can there then be any before whom, and against whom we should be more ashamed to offend?



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offend? When the Prodigal in the Parable would set forth the shamefulness of his Miscarriage, he aggravates it from hence, that he had offended against and before one to whom he had been so infinitely obliged: *Father*, says he, *I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight.*

3. We are ashamed likewise to be guilty of any fault or crime before those Persons who are clear of it, or of any thing of the like nature themselves. Men are not apt to be ashamed before those who are their fellow-Criminals, and involved with them in the same guilt, because they do not stand in awe of them, nor can have any reverence for them. Those, who are equally guilty, must bear with one another. We are not apt to fear the censures and reproofs of those, who are as bad as our selves: but we are ashamed to do a foul and unworthy Action, before those who are innocent and free from the same, or the like Sins and Vices which we are guilty of.

Now whenever we commit any Sin, it is in the presence of the Holy God, who

who hath no part with us in our crimes, whose Nature is removed at the farthest distance from Sin, and is as contrary to it as can be. *There is no iniquity with the Lord our God.* And therefore of all Persons in the World we should blush to be guilty of it before him.

4. We are apt also to be ashamed to do any thing before those who dislike and detest what we do. To do a wicked Action before those who are not offended at it, or perhaps take pleasure in it, is no such matter of shame to us. Now of all others, God is the greatest hater of Sin, and the most perfect Enemy to it in the whole World. *Hab.*

1. 13. *Thou art of purer eyes, than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity, i. e.* with patience, and without an infinite hatred and abhorrence of it. Such is the unspotted Purity and Perfection of the Divine Nature, that it is not possible that God should give the least countenance to any thing that is Evil. *Psal. 5. 4, 5, Thou art not a God, says David there to him, that hast Pleasure in iniquity, neither shall evil dwell with thee: The wicked shall*

Vol. 8. *shall not stand in thy sight; thou hatest all the workers of iniquity.*

5. We are ashamed likewise to do any thing that is evil and unseemly before those, who we are afraid will publish our faults to others, and will make known and expose the folly of them. Now whenever we sin, it is before him who will most certainly one day bring all our works of darkness into the open light, and expose all our secret deeds of dishonesty upon the publick Stage of the World, and make all the vilest of our actions known, and lay them open, with all the shameful Circumstances of them, before Men and Angels, to our everlasting Shame and Confusion. This is the meaning of that Proverbial Speech, so often used by our Saviour, *There is nothing cover'd that shall not be revealed, neither hid that shall not be made manifest.* All the Sins which we now commit with so much caution, in secret and dark retirements, shall in that great day of Revelation, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, be set in open view, and in so full and strong a light, that all the World shall see them; and



and that which was plotted and contrived in so much secrecy, and hardly whisper'd in this World, shall then *be proclaimed aloud*, and as it were *upon the House tops*.

6. and *Lastly*, We are ashamed and afraid to commit a fault before those, who we believe will call us to an account for it, and punish us severely. A Man may suffer innocently and for a good Cause; but all suffering in that case, is by wise and good men esteemed honourable and glorious, and tho' we are condemned by men, we are acquitted in our own Consciences: But that which is properly called Punishment is always attended with Infamy and Reproach; because it always supposeth some fault and crime, as the ground and reason of it. Hence it is that in this World, men are not only afraid, but ashamed to commit any fault before those, who they think have Authority and Power to punish it. He is an impudent Villain indeed, that will venture to cut a Purse in the presence of the Judge.

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Now

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Now whenever we commit any Wickedness, we do it under the Eye of the great Judge of the World, who stedfastly beholds us, and whose Omnipotent Justice stands by us ready armed and charged for our Destruction, and can in a moment cut us off. Every Sin that we are guilty of, in thought, word or deed, is all in the presence of the Holy, and Just, and Powerful God; whose Power enables him, and whose Holiness and Justice will effectually engage him, one time or other, if a timely Repentance doth not prevent it, to inflict a terrible Punishment upon all the Workers of iniquity.

You see then by all that hath been said upon this Argument, how shameful a thing Sin is, and what *Confusion of face* the reflection upon our wicked Lives ought to cause in all of us. *What fruit had ye then in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed?* If ever we be brought to true Repentance for our sins, it cannot but be matter of great Shame to us.

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We find in Scripture that Shame doth continually accompany Repentance, and is inseparable from it. This is one Mark and Character of a true Penitent, that he is ashamed of what he hath done. Thus *Ezra*, when he makes Confession of the sins of the People, he testifies and declares his Shame for what they had done; *I said, O my God! I am ashamed and blush to lift up mine Eyes to thee my God; for our iniquities are increased over our Heads, and our trespasses are grown up to the Heavens, Ezra 9. 6.* And may not we of this Nation at this day take these words unto our selves, considering to what a strange height our sins are grown, and how iniquity abounds among us? So likewise the Prophet *Jeremiah*, when he would express the Repentance of the People of *Israel*, *Jer. 3. 25. We lye down (says he) in our shame, and our Confusion covereth us, because we have sinned against the Lord our God.* In like manner the Prophet *Daniel*, after he had in the Name of the People made an humble acknowledgment of their manifold and great Sins, he



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takes shame to himself, and them for them. Dan. 9. 5. *We have sinned, says he, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled in departing from thy Precepts, and from thy Judgments. O Lord, righteousness belongeth to thee; but unto us confusion of face, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near and that are far off, through all the Countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespasss, which they have trespassed against thee: O Lord! To us belongeth confusion of face, to our Kings, to our Princes, and to our Fathers, because we have sinned against thee. By which we may judge, how considerable and essential a part of Repentance, this Holy Man esteemed Shame, for the sins they had been guilty of, to be. And indeed upon all occasions of solemn Repentance, and Humiliation for sin, this taking shame for their sins is hardly ever omitted, as if there could be no sincere Confession of sin and Repentance for it, without testifying their shame, and Confusion of face*

face upon the remembrance of their  
sins.

Serm. 6.

Now to stir up this affection of  
Shame in us, let me offer to you these  
three Considerations.

I. Consider what great reason we  
have to be heartily ashamed of all the  
sins and offences which we have  
been guilty of against God. It was  
a good old Precept of Philosophy, *that*  
*we should reverence our selves*, i. e.  
that we should never do any thing  
that should be matter of Shame and  
Reproach to us afterwards, nothing  
that misbecomes us, and is unworthy  
of us.

I have shewn at large, that all Sin  
and Vice is a dishonour to our Na-  
ture, and beneath the Dignity of it ;  
that it is a great reproach to our  
Reason, and directly contrary to our  
true and best Interest ; that it hath  
all the aggravating circumstances of In-  
famy and Shame ; that every sin that  
was at any time committed by us,  
was done in the presence of one,  
whom of all Persons in the World

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we have most Reason to reverence, and against him, to whom of all others we stand most obliged for the greatest Favours, for innumerable Benefits, for infinite Mercy and Patience and Forbearance towards us, in the presence of the Holy and Just God, who is at the farthest distance from sin, and the greatest and most implacable Enemy to it in the whole World; and who will one day punish all our faults, and expose us to open shame for them; who will *bring every work into judgment, and every secret sin* that ever we committed, and take Vengeance upon us for all our iniquities. So that whenever we sin, we shamefully entreat our selves, and give the deepest wounds to our Reputation in the esteem of him, who is the most competent Judge of what is truly Honorable and Praise-worthy, and cloath our selves with shame and dishonour.

We are ashamed of Poverty, because the poor Man is despised, and almost ridiculous in the Eye of the proud and covetous rich Man, *whose riches are his high Tower,* and make him



him apt to look down upon the poor Man that is below him, with contempt and scorn; we are ashamed of a dangerous and contagious Disease, because all men fly infectious company: but a Man may be poor or sick by misfortune; but no Man is wicked, but by his own fault and wilful choice. Ill-natur'd and inconsiderate men will be apt to condemn us for our poverty and affliction in any kind: but by our Vices we render our selves odious to God, and to all good and considerate men.

II. Consider that shame for sin now, is the way to prevent Eternal Shame and Confusion hereafter. For this is one great part of the Misery of another World, that the sinner shall then *be filled with everlasting shame and confusion* at the remembrance of his faults and folly. The Eternal Misery of wicked men is sometimes in Scripture represented, as if it consisted only or chiefly in the Infamy and Reproach which will then overwhelm them, when all their crimes and faults shall be exposed and laid open to the view of the whole

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World;

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World. *Dan. 12. 2.* where the general Resurrection of the just and unjust is thus described; *Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to everlasting shame and contempt:* Where everlasting life and everlasting shame are opposed, as if Eternal shame were a kind of perpetual Death.

In this World sinners make a hard shift, by concealing or extenuating their faults, as well as they can, to suppress or lessen their shame; they have not now so clear and full Conviction of the evil and folly of their sin; God is pleased to bear with them, and to spare them at present, and they do not yet feel the dismal effects and consequences of a wicked life: but in the next World, when *the righteous judgment of God is revealed*, and the full Vials of his wrath shall be poured forth upon sinners, they shall then *be clothed with shame as with a garment, and be covered with confusion*; then they will feel the folly of their sins, and have a sensible Demonstration within themselves of

will prevent eternal.

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Serm. 6.

of the infinite Evil of them; their own Consciences will then furiously fly in their faces, and with the greatest bitterness and rage upbraid and reproach them with the folly of their own doings; and so long as we are sensible, that we suffer for our own folly, so long we must unavoidably be ashamed of what we have done. So that if sinners shall be everlastingly tormented in another World, it necessarily follows, that they shall be eternally confounded.

Is it not then better to remember our ways now, and to be ashamed and repent of them, than to bring everlasting Shame and Confusion upon our selves, before God, and Angels, and Men? This is the Argument which St. John useth, to take men off from sin, and to engage them to Holiness and Righteousness of Life; 1 Joh. 2. 28. *That when he shall appear, that is, when he shall come to judge the World, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.*

III. And



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III. And *lastly*, Consider that nothing sets men at a farther distance from Repentance, and all hopes of their becoming better, and brings them nearer to Ruin, than Impudence in a sinful course. There are too many in the World, who are so far from being ashamed of their Wickedness, and blushing at the mention of their faults, that they boast of them, and glory in them. God often complains of this in the People of *Israel*, as a sad presage of their Ruin, and an ill sign of their desperate and irrecoverable Condition; *Jer. 3. 3. Thou hadst a whore's forehead, and refusedst to be ashamed;* and *Jerem. 6. 15. Were they ashamed when they committed abominations? Nay, they were not ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore they shall fall among them that fall, and in the time that I visit them, they shall be cast down.* Hear likewise how the Apostle doth lament the case of such Persons, as incurable and past all remedy: *Philip. 3. 18, 19. There are many of whom I have told you often, and now tell you, even weeping, that they are enemies to the Cross of Christ;*

*Christ; whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, whose glory is in their shame.* Such Persons who glory in that which ought to be *their shame*, what can their *end* be but *destruction*? Serm. 6.

There is certainly no greater argument of a degenerate Person, and of one that is utterly lost to all sense of goodness, than to be void of shame: and as on the one hand, they must be very towardsly, and well dispos'd to Virtue, who are drawn by Ingenuity, and meer sense of Obligation and Kindness; so on the other hand, they must be very stupid and insensible, who are not wrought upon by Arguments of fear, and sense of shame. There is hardly any hopes of that Man, who is not to be reclaimed from an Evil course, neither by the apprehension of danger, nor of disgrace, and who can at once securely neglect both his Safety and Reputation.

Hear how the Prophet represents the deplorable Case of such Persons, *Isa. 3. 9. The shew of their countenance bears*

Vol. 8. *bears witness against them; in the Hebrew it is, The hardness of their countenance doth testify against them, and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not. Wo unto their Souls, for they have rewarded evil to themselves. When Men are once arrived to that pitch of Impiety, as to harden their Foreheads against all sense and shew of Shame, and so as to be able to set a good face upon the foulest Matter in the World; wo unto them, because their Case seems then to be desperate, and past all hopes of Recovery. For who can hope, that a Man will forsake his Sins, when he is not so much as ashamed of them? But yet one would think, that those that are not ashamed of their Impiety, should be ashamed of their Impudence, and should at least blush at this, that they can do the vilest and the most shameful things in the World without blushing.*

To conclude this whole Discourse, let the Consideration of the evil and shamefulnes of Sin have this double effect upon us, to make us heartily ashamed of the past Errors and Miscarriages



riages of our Lives, and firmly resolved to do better for the future.

Serm. 6.

I. To be heartily ashamed of the past Errors of our Lives. So often as we reflect upon the manifold and heinous Provocations of the Divine Majesty, which many of us have been guilty of in the long course of a wicked Life, together with the heavy Aggravations of our Sins, by all the circumstances that can render them abominable and shameful, not only in the Eye of God and Men, but of our own Consciences likewise; we have great reason to humble our selves before God, in a penitent acknowledgment of them, and every one of us to say with Job, *Behold I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth, I abhor my self, and repent in dust and ashes; and with Ezra, O my God! I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God; for our iniquities are increased over our heads, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens: And now, O my God, what shall we say after this? for we have forsaken thy commandments; and with holy Daniel, We have sinned, and have committed*

Vol. 8. committed iniquity, and have done wickedly; O Lord! Righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of face. Thus we should reproach and upbraid our selves in the Presence of that Holy God, whom we have so often and so highly offended, and against whom we have done as evil things as we could, and say with the prodigal Son in the Parable; *Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son.*

If we would thus take shame to our selves, and humble our selves before God, he would *be merciful to us miserable Sinners*; he would *take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously*; and so soon as ever he saw us coming towards him, would meet us with joy, and embrace us in the Arms of his Mercy. And then,

II. As we should be heartily ashamed of the past Errours and Miscarriages of our Lives, so we should firmly resolve, by God's Grace, to do better for the future; never to consent to Iniquity, or to do any thing which we are convinc'd is contrary to our Duty, and

and which will be matter of Shame to us, when we come to look back upon it, and make our Blood to rise in our Faces at the mention or intimation of it; which will make us to sneak, and hang down our heads, when we are twitted and upbraided with it, and which, if it be not prevented by a timely Humiliation and Repentance, will fill us with Horror and Amaze-ment, with Shame and Confusion of Face, both at the Hour of Death, and in the Day of Judgment.

So that when we look into our Lives, and examine the Actions of them, when we consider what we have done, and what our Doings have deserved, we should, in a due sense of the great and manifold Miscarriages of our Lives, and from a deep Sorrow and Shame and Derefstation of our selves for them; I say, we should, with that true Penitent described in *Job*, take Words to our selves, and say, *Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I will not offend any more; That which I know not, teach thou me; and if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.* And thus I have done with the second In-  
 \* convenience



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convenience of a sinful and vicious  
Course of Life, viz. that the reflection  
upon it afterwards causeth Shame;  
*What fruit had you then in those things,  
whereof ye are now ashamed?*

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SER.

# SERMON VII.

The final Issue of Sin, an Argument for Repentance.

The Third Sermon on this Text.

ROM. VI. 21, 22.

*What fruit had ye then in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become Servants to God, ye have your fruit unto Holiness, and the end Everlasting Life.*

THESE words are a Comparison between an Holy and Virtuous and a Sinful and Vicious Course of Life, and set before us  
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the manifest Inconveniences of the one, and the manifold Advantages of the other. I have enter'd into a Discourse upon the *First* of these Heads, *viz.* The manifest Inconveniences of a sinful and vicious Course: And the Text mentions these *three*.

I. That it is Unprofitable.

II. That the reflection upon it afterwards is matter of Shame. These *Two* I have spoken largely to. I shall now proceed to the

III. And *last* Inconvenience, which the Text mentions, of a sinful and vicious Course of Life, *viz.* That the final Issue and Consequence of these things is very dismal and miserable; *The end of those things is Death.* No Fruit then when ye did these things; shame now that you come to reflect upon them; and Misery and Death at the last.

There are indeed almost innumerable Considerations and Arguments to discourage and deter men from sin; the Unreasonableness of it in it self; the Injustice



Injustice and Disloyalty, and Ingratitude of it in respect to God ; the ill Example of it to others ; the Cruelty of it to our selves ; the Shame and Dishonour that attends it ; the Grief and Sorrow which it will cost us, if ever we be brought to a due Sense of it ; the Trouble and Horror of a guilty Conscience, that will perpetually haunt us ; but above all the miserable Event and sad Issue of a wicked Course of Life continued in, and finally unrepented of. The Temptations to sin may be alluring enough, and look upon us with a smiling Countenance, and the Commission may afford us a short and imperfect Pleasure : but the Remembrance of it will certainly be bitter, and the End of it miserable.

And this Consideration is of all others the most apt to work upon the generality of men, especially upon the more obstinate and obdurate sort of sinners, and those whom no other Arguments will penetrate ; that whatever the present Pleasure and Advantage of sin may be, it will be Bitterness and Misery in the end.

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The two former Inconveniences of a sinful Course, which I have lately discoursed of, *viz.* That Sin is Unprofitable, and that it is Shameful, are very considerable, and ought to be great Arguments against it to every sinner, and considerate Man : and yet how light are they, and but as the very small dust upon the balance, in comparison of that insupportable weight of Misery which will oppress the sinner at last ! *Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of Man that doth evil.* This, this is the sting of all, that the end of these things is death.

It is very usual in Scripture to express the greatest Happiness, and the greatest Misery, by Life and Death ; Life being the first and most desirable of all other Blessings, because it is the Foundation of them, and that which makes us capable of all the rest. Hence we find in Scripture, that all the Blessings of the Gospel are summ'd up in this one word, *John 20. 31. These things are written, that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ.*

Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have Life through his Name. 1 Joh. 4. 9. In this was manifest the love of God towards us, because God sent his only begotten Son into the World, that we might live through him. So that under this Term or Notion of Life, the Scripture is wont to express all Happiness to us, and more especially that Eternal Life which is the great Promise of the Gospel. And this is Life by way of Eminency; as if this frail and mortal and miserable Life, which we live here in this World, did not deserve that Name.

Serm. 7.

And on the other hand, all the Evils which are consequent upon sin, especially the dreadful and lasting Misery of another World, are called by the Name of Death, *The end of these things is Death.* So the Apostle, here in the Text, and 23. v. *The wages of sin is Death*, not only a Temporal Death, but such a Death as is opposed to Eternal Life; *The wages of sin is Death: but the gift of God is Eternal Life through Jesus Christ our Lord.* So that Death here in the



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Text is plainly intended to comprehend in it all those fearful and astonishing Miseries, wherewith the wrath of God will pursue and afflict sinners in another World.

But what and how great this Misery is, I am not able to declare to you; *it hath no more enter'd into the heart of man*, than those great and glorious things which God *hath laid up for them that love him*: and as I would fain hope, that none of us here shall ever have the sad experience of it; so none but those who have felt it, are able to give a tolerable description of the intolerableness of it.

But by what the Scripture hath said of it in general, and in such Metaphors as are most level to our present Capacity, it appears so full of Terror, that I am loth to attempt the Representation of it. There are so many other Arguments, that are more Humane and Natural, and more proper to work upon the Reason and Ingenuity of Men; as the great Love and Kindness of God to us; the grievous Sufferings of his Son for us; the Unreason-

Unreasonableness and Shamefulness of Sin; the present Benefit and Advantage, the Peace and Pleasure of an Holy and Virtuous Life; and the mighty Rewards promised to it in another World, that one would think these should be abundantly sufficient to prevail with men to gain them to goodness, and that they need not be frightened into it, and to have the Law laid to them, as it was once given to the People of *Israel*, in *thunder and lightning, in blackness, in darkness and tempest*, so as to make them *exceedingly to fear and tremble*. And it seems a very hard Case, that when we have to deal with men, sensible enough of their Interest in other Cases, and diligent enough to mind it, we cannot persuade them to accept of Happiness, without setting before them the Terrors of Eternal Darkness, and those amazing and endless Miseries, which will certainly be the Portion of those who refuse so great an Happiness; this I say seems very hard, that men must be carried to the Gate of Hell, before they can be brought to set their faces towards Heaven, and

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to think in good earnest of getting thither.

And yet it cannot be dissembled, that the Nature of men is so degenerate, as to stand in need of this Argument; and that men are so far engaged in an Evil Course, that they are not to be reclaimed from it by any other Consideration, but of the endless and unspeakable Misery of impenitent sinners in another World. And therefore God, knowing how necessary this is, doth frequently make use of it; and our Blessed Saviour, than whom none was ever more mild and gentle, doth often set this Consideration before men to take them off from sin, and to bring them to do better. And this St. Paul tells us, *Rom. i. 18.* is one principal thing which renders the Gospel so powerful an Instrument for the reforming and saving of Mankind, because *therein the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.*

So that how harsh and unpleasant soever this Argument may be, the great stupidity and folly of some men,

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men, and their inveterate obstinacy in an Evil Course makes it necessary for us to press it home, that those who will not be moved, and made sensible of the danger and inconvenience of sin by gentler Arguments, may be rous'd and awakened by the Terrors of Eternal Misery.

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Serm. 7.

That the last Issue and Consequence of a wicked Life will be very Miserable, the general Apprehension of Mankind concerning the fate of bad men in another World, and the secret misgivings of mens Consciences, gives men too much ground to fear. Besides that the Justice of Divine Providence, which is not many times in this World so clear and manifest, does seem to require that there should be a time of Recompence, when the Virtue and Patience of good men should be rewarded, and the Insolence and Obstinacy of bad men should be punish'd. This cannot but appear very reasonable to any Man, that considers the Nature of God, and is persuaded that he governs the World, and hath given Laws to Mankind, by the observance whereof they may be  
Happy,

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Happy, and by the neglect and contempt whereof they must be miserable.

But that there might remain no doubts upon the Minds of Men, concerning these matters, God hath been pleas'd to reveal this from Heaven, by a Person sent by him on purpose to declare it to the World; and to the truth of these Doctrines concerning a future state and a day of Judgment, and Recompences, God hath given Testimony by unquestionable Miracles wrought for the Confirmation of them, and particularly by the *Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead*, whereby he hath given an assurance unto all men, that he is the Person ordained by God to judge the World in righteousness, and to render to every Man according to his deeds; to them, who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal Life; but to them, who obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of Man that doth evil.

So that how quietly soever wicked Men may pass through this World, or out of it, (which they seldom do) Misery will certainly overtake their Sins at last; unspeakable and intolerable Misery, arising from the anguish of a guilty Conscience, from a lively Apprehension of their sad Loss, and from a quick sense of the sharp Pain which they labor under; and all this aggravated and set off with the Consideration of past Pleasure, and the Despair of future Ease. Each of these is Misery enough, and all of them together do constitute and make up that dismal and forlorn State, which the Scripture calls Hell and Damnation.

I shall therefore briefly represent (for it is by no means desirable to dwell long upon so melancholy and frightful an Argument.)

*First,* The principal Ingredients which constitute this miserable State. And,

*Secondly,* The Aggravations of it.

*First,*



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*First*, The principal Ingredients which constitute this miserable State; and they are these *three*, which I have mentioned.

I. The anguish of a guilty Mind.

II. The lively Apprehensions of the invaluable Happiness which they have lost.

III. A quick Sense of the intolerable Pains which they lie under.

I. The Anguish of a guilty Conscience. And this is natural; for there is a Worm that abides in a guilty Conscience, and is continually gnawing it. This is that our Saviour calls *the Worm that dyes not*. And tho' God should inflict no positive Punishment upon Sinners, yet this is a Revenge which every Man's Mind would take upon him; for things are so order'd by God in the original Frame and Constitution of our Minds, that on the one hand Peace and Pleasure, Contentment and Satisfaction do naturally arise in our Minds from the Conscience

science of Well doing, and spring up in the Soul of every good Man: And on the other hand, no Man knowingly does an evil Action, but his guilty Conscience galls him for it, and the remembrance of it is full of Bitterness to him.

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And this the Sinner feels in this World; he disguiseth and dissembleth his Trouble as much as he can, and shifts off these uneasie Thoughts by all the Diversions he can devise, and by this means palliates his Disease, and renders his Condition in some sort tolerable unto himself: but when he is alone, or cast upon the Bed of Sickness, and his Thoughts are let loose upon him, and he hath nothing to give them a Diversion, how does his Guilt ferment and work! and the Feaver, which lurkt before, does now shew it self, and is ready to burn him up; so that nothing can appear more dismal and ghastly, than such a Man does to himself.

And much more, when Sinners come into the other World, and are entred into the Regions of Darkness,  
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and the melancholy Shades, where Evil Spirits are continually wandring up and down; where they can meet with nothing either of Employment or Pleasure, to give the least Diversi- on to their pensive Minds; where they shall find nothing to do, but to reflect upon, and bemoan themselves; where all the wicked Actions that e- ver they committed shall come fresh into their Minds, and stare their Con- sciences in the face. It is not to be imagined, what sad Scenes will then be present to their Imaginations, and what sharp Reflections their own guilt- y Minds will make upon them, and what Swarms of Furies will possess them.

So soon as ever they are entered up- on that State, they will then find themselves forsaken of all those Com- forts which they once placed so much Happiness in; and they will have nothing to converse with, but their own uneasie selves, and those that are as miserable as themselves, and therefore incapable of admini- string any Comfort to one another. They will then have nothing to think

on,



on, but what will trouble them; and every new Thought will be a new increase of their Trouble. Their Guilt will make them restless, and the more restless they are, their more will their Minds be enraged; and there will be no end of their Vexation, because the Cause and Ground of it is perpetual. For there is no possible way to get rid of Guilt, but by Repentance; and there is no Encouragement, no Argument to Repentance, where there is no hope of Pardon. So that if God should hold his Hand, and leave Sinners to themselves, and to the Lashes of their own Conscience, a more severe and terrible Torment can hardly be imagin'd, than that which a guilty Mind would execute upon it self.

II. Another Ingredient into the Miseries of Sinners in another World, is the lively Apprehension of the invaluable Happiness which they have lost by their own Obstinacy and foolish Choice. In the next World wicked Men shall be for ever separated from God, who is the Fountain of Happiness, and from all the Comforts of his Presence and Favour. This, our Sa-  
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viour tells us, is the first part of that dreadful Sentence that shall be passed upon the wicked at the great Day; *Depart from me*; which Words, tho' they do not signifie any positive Infliction and Torment, yet they import the greatest Loss that can be imagined. And it is not so easie to determine which is the greatest of Evils, Loss or Pain. Indeed to a Creature that is only endowed with Sense, there can be no Misery but that of Pain and Suffering: but to those who have Reason and Understanding, and are capable of knowing the value of things, and of reflecting upon themselves in the want of them, the greatest loss may be as grievous and hard to be born, as the greatest pain.

'Tis true, that sinners are now so immerst in the gross and sensual delights of this World, that they have no apprehension of the Joys of Heaven, and the Pleasures of God's presence, and of the Happiness that is to be enjoyed in Communion with him, and therefore they are not now capable of estimating the greatness of this loss. But this insensibleness of wicked

wicked men continues no longer than this present state, which affords them variety of Objects of Pleasure and of Business to divert them and entertain them: but when they come into the other World, they shall then have nothing else to think upon, but the sad Condition into which they have brought themselves, nothing to do but to pore and meditate upon their own Misfortune, when they shall lift up their Eyes, and with *the rich Man* in the Parable, in the midst of their *Torments*, look up to those who are *in Abraham's bosom*; and their Misery will be mightily increased by the Contemplation of that Happiness which others enjoy, and themselves have so foolishly forfeited and fallen short of; insomuch that it would be happy for them, if that God, from whose presence they are banisht, that Heaven from which they have excluded themselves, and that everlasting Glory, which they have despised and neglected, might be for ever hid from their Eyes, and never come into their Minds.

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III. This is not all, but besides the sad Apprehension of their Loss, they shall endure the sharpest Pains. These God hath threatned sinners withal, and they are in Scripture represented to us, by the most grievous and intolerable Pains that in this World we are acquainted withal, as by the Pain of Burning. Hence the wicked are said *to be cast into the Lake, which burns with fire and brimstone, and into the fire which is not quenched*; which whether it be literally to be understood or not, is certainly intended to signifie the most severe kind of Torment; but what that is, and in what manner it shall be inflicted, none know but they that feel it, and lie under it. The Scripture tells so much in general of it, as is enough to warn men to avoid it; that it is the effect of a mighty Displeasure, and of Anger armed with Omnipotence, and consequently must needs be very terrible, more dreadful than we can now conceive, and probably greater than can be described by any of those Pains and Sufferings which now we are acquainted withal; for

who

who knows the power of God's anger, and the utmost of what Almighty Justice can do to Sinners? Who can comprehend the vast significancy of those Expressions, *Fear him, who after he hath killed can destroy both body and soul in Hell?* and again, *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God?* One would think this were Misery enough, and needed no farther Aggravation; and yet it hath *Two* terrible ones, from the Consideration of past Pleasures which Sinners have enjoyed in this World, and from an utter Despair of future Ease and Remedy.

Serm 7.

1. From the Consideration of the past Pleasures which Sinners have enjoy'd in this Life. This will make their Sufferings much more sharp and sensible; for as nothing commends Pleasure more, and gives Happiness a quicker taste and relish, than precedent Sufferings and Pain, there is not perhaps a greater Pleasure in the World, than the strange and sudden Ease which a Man finds after a sharp fit of the Stone or Cholic, or after a Man is taken off the

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Rack, and Nature which was in an Agony before is all at once set at perfect Ease: So on the other hand, nothing exasperates Suffering more, and sets a keener Edge upon Misery, than to step into Afflictions and Pain immediately out of a state of great Ease and Pleasure. This we find in the Parable was the great Aggravation of the rich Man's Torment, that he had first *received his good things*, and was afterwards *Tormented*. We may do well to consider this, that those Pleasures of Sin which have now so much of Temptation in them, will in the next World be one of the chief Aggravations of our Torment.

2. The greatest Aggravation of this Misery will be, that it is attended with the Despair of any future Ease; and when Misery and Despair meet together, they make a Man completely miserable. The duration of this Misery is exprest to us in Scripture, by such words as are us'd to signify the longest and most interminable duration. *Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire*, Matt. 25. 41. *Where the worm*

*dieth*



dieth not, and the fire is not quenched, Mark 9. 43. And 2 Theff. 1. 7. it is there said, that those who know not God, and obey not the Gospel of his Son, shall be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. And in Rev. 20. 10. That the wicked shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. And what can be imagined beyond this? This is the perfection of Misery, to lie under the greatest Torment, and yet be in despair of ever finding the least Ease.

And thus I have done with the First thing I propounded to speak to from this Text, viz. The manifest Inconveniences of a sinful and vicious Course of Life; that it brings no present Benefit or Advantage to us; that the reflection upon it causeth Shame; and that it is fearful and miserable in the last Issue and Consequence of it. *What fruit had you, &c.*

I should now have proceeded to the Second Part of the Text, which represents to us the manifold Advantages of an Holy and Virtuous Course

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of Life; 22. v. *But now being made free from sin, and become the servants of righteousness, ye have your fruit unto holiness, there's the present Advantage of it; and the end everlasting life, there's the future Reward of it.* But this is a large Argument, which will require a Discourse by it self, and therefore I shall not now enter upon it; but shall only make some reflections upon what hath been said, concerning the miserable Issue and Consequence of a wicked Life impenitently persisted in.

And surely if we firmly believe and seriously consider these things, we have no reason to be fond of any Vice; we can take no great Comfort or Contentment in a sinful Course. If we could for the seeming Advantage and short Pleasure of some sins, dispense with the Temporal Mischiefs and Inconveniences of them, which yet I cannot see how any Prudent and Considerate Man could do; if we could conquer Shame, and bear the Infamy and Reproach which attends most sins, and could digest the upbraidings of our own Consciences,

so often as we call them to remembrance, and reflect seriously upon them; tho' for the gratifying an importunate Inclination, and an impetuous Appetite, all the Inconveniences of them might be born withal; yet methinks the very thought of the End and Issue of a wicked Life, that *the end of these things is Death, that indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish*, far greater than we can now describe or imagine, *shall be to every soul of Man that doth evil*, should over-rule us. Tho' the violence of an irregular lust and desire are able to bear down all other Arguments, yet methinks the Eternal Interest of our precious and immortal Souls should still lie near our Hearts, and affect us very sensibly. Methinks the Consideration of another World, and of all Eternity, and of that dismal fate which attends Impenitent Sinners after this Life, and the dreadful hazard of being miserable for ever, should be more than enough to dishearten any Man from a wicked life, and to bring him to a better Mind and Course.

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And if the plain Representations of these things do not prevail with men to this purpose, it is a sign that either they do not believe these things, or else that they do not consider them; one of these two must be the reason why any Man, notwithstanding these terrible threatnings of God's Word, does venture to continue in an Evil Course.

'Tis vehemently to be suspected, that men do not really believe these things, that they are not fully persuaded that there is another state after this Life, in which the righteous God will render to every Man according to his deeds: and therefore so much Wickedness as we see in the lives of men, so much Infidelity may reasonably be suspected to lie lurking in their Hearts. They may indeed seemingly profess to believe these things; but he that would know what a Man inwardly and firmly believes, should attend rather to his Actions, than to his Verbal Professions: For if any Man lives so, as no Man that believes the Principles of the Christian Religion

Religion in reason can live, there is too much reason to question whether that Man doth believe his Religion; he may say he does, but there is a far greater Evidence in the Case than Words; the Actions of the Man are by far the most credible Declarations of the inward Sense and Perswasion of his Mind.

Did men firmly and heartily believe that there is a God that governs the World, and regards the Actions of men, and that *he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the World in righteousness*, and that all Mankind shall appear before him in that day, and every Action that they have done in their whole lives shall be brought upon the Stage, and pass a strict Examination and Censure, and that those who have made Conscience of their Duty to God and men, and have *lived soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World*, shall be unspeakably and eternally Happy in the next; but those who have lived lewd and licentious lives, and persisted in an *Impenitent Course*, shall be extreamly

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ly and everlastingly miserable, without Pity, and without Comfort, and without Remedy, and without Hope of ever being otherwise; I say, if men were fully and firmly perswaded of these things, it is not Credible, it is hardly Possible that they should live such Prophane and Impious, such Careless and Dissolute Lives, as we daily see a great part of Mankind do.

That Man that can be aw'd from his Duty, or tempted to Sin by any of the Pleasures or Terrors of this World, that for the present enjoyment of his Lusts can be contented to venture his Soul, what greater Evidence than this can there be, that this Man does not believe the threatenings of the Gospel, and how *fearful a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God?* That Man that can be willing to undergo an hard Service for several years, that he may be in a way to get a Estate, and be rich in this World; and yet will not be perswaded to restrain himself of his Liberty, or to deny his Pleasure, or to check his Appetite

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or Lust, for the greatest Reward that God can promise, or the severest Punishment that he can threaten; can any Man reasonably think, that this Man is perswaded of any such Happiness or Misery after this Life, as is plainly revealed in the Gospel, that *verily there is a reward for the righteous, and verily there is a God that judgeth the Earth?* For what can he that believes not one syllable of the Bible, do worse than this comes to?

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Serm. 7.

A strong and vigorous Faith even in Temporal Cases, is a powerful Principle of Action, especially if it be back'd and enforc'd with Arguments of fear. He that believes the reality of a thing, and that it is good for him, and that it may be attained, and that if he do attain it, it will make him very happy, and that without it he shall be extremely miserable; such a Belief and Perswasion will put a Man upon difficult things, and make him to put forth a vigorous endeavour, and to use a mighty industry for the obtaining of that, concerning which he is thus perswaded.

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And the Faith of the Gospel ought to be so much the more powerful, by how much the Objects of hope and fear, which it presents to us, are greater and more considerable. Did men fully believe the Happiness of Heaven, and the Torments of Hell, and were they as verily perswaded of the truth of them, as if they were before their Eyes, how insignificant would all the Terrors and Temptations of Sense be to draw them into Sin, and seduce them from their Duty?

But altho' it seems very strange, and almost incredible, that men should believe these things, and yet live wicked and impious lives; yet because I have no mind, and God knows there's no need to increase the number of Infidels in this Age, I shall chuse rather to impute a great deal of the wickedness that is in the World, to the Inconsiderateness of men, than to their Unbelief. I will grant that they do in some sort believe these things, or at least that they do not disbelieve them; and then the great cause of mens ruin must be, that they do

do not attend to the Consequence of this Belief, and how men ought to live that are thus perswaded. Men stifle their Reason, and suffer themselves to be hurried away by Sense, into the embraces of sensual Objects and Things present, but do not consider what the end of these things will be, and what is like to become of them hereafter; for it is not to be imagined, but that that Man who shall calmly consider with himself what Sin is, the shortness of its Pleasure, and the Eternity of its Punishment, should seriously resolve upon a better Course of life.

Serm. 7.

And why do we not consider these things, which are of so infinite Concernment to us? What have we our Reason for, but to reflect upon our selves, and to mind what we do, and wisely to compare things together, and upon the whole matter to judge what makes most for our true and lasting Interest? to consider our whole selves, our Souls as well as our Bodies; and our whole duration not only in this World, but in the other, not only with regard to Time, but to Eternity? to look before us to the last

Issue

Vol. 8. Issue and Event of our Actions, and to the farthest Consequence of them, and to reckon upon what will be hereafter, as well as what is present ; and if we suspect or hope or fear, especially if we have good reason to believe a future state after Death, in which we shall be happy or miserable to all Eternity, according as we manage and behave our selves in this World, to resolve to make it our greatest Design and Concernment while we are in this World, so to live and demean our selves, that we may be of the number of those that shall be accounted worthy to escape that Misery, and to obtain that happiness, which will last and continue for ever.

And if men would but apply their Minds seriously to the Consideration of these things, they could not act so imprudently as they do ; they would not live so by chance and without design, taking the Pleasure that comes next, and avoiding the present Evils which press upon them, without any regard to those that are future, and at a distance, tho' they be infinitely greater and more considerable : If men could have the Patience to debate and
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argue these matters with themselves, they could not live so preposterously as they do, preferring their Bodies before their Souls, and the World before God, and the things which are Temporal before the things that are Eternal.

Serm. 7.

Did men verily and in good earnest believe but half of that to be true, which hath now been declared to you, concerning the miserable state of impenitent Sinners in another World, (and I am very sure, that the one half of that which is true concerning that state hath not been told you) I say, did we in any measure believe what hath been so imperfectly represented, *What manner of persons should we all be, in all holy conversation and godliness, waiting for and hastening unto (that is, making haste to make the best preparation we could for) the coming of the day of God!*

I will conclude all with our Saviour's Exhortation to his Disciples, and to all others; *Watch ye therefore and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things, and to stand before the Son of Man: To whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, world with out end. Amen.*

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SERMON VIII.

The present and future Advantage
of an Holy and Virtuous Life.

The Fourth Sermon on this Text.

ROM. VI. 21, 22.

*What fruit had ye then in those things,
whereof ye are now ashamed? For the
end of those things is death. But now
being made free from sin, and become
Servants to God, ye have your fruit un-
to Holiness, and the end Everlasting
Life.*

I Have several times told you, that
the Apostle in these words makes
a Comparison between an Holy and
Virtuous, and a Sinful and Vicious
Q Course

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Course of Life, and sets before us the manifest Inconveniences of the one, and the manifold Advantages of the other.

I have finish'd my Discourse upon the *First* Part of the Comparison; the manifest Inconveniences of a sinful and vicious Course. I proceed now to the other Part of the Comparison, which was the

Second Thing I propounded to speak to from these words, *viz.* the manifold Benefits and Advantages of an Holy and Virtuous Course; and that upon these *Two* accounts.

First, of the present Benefit and Advantage of it, which the Apostle here calls *Fruit*, *Ye have your fruit unto holiness.*

Secondly, In respect of the future reward of it, *and the End everlasting Life.* So that here is a considerable Earnest in hand, besides a mighty Recompence afterwards, infinitely beyond the proportion of our best Actions and Services, both in regard of the
* greatness

greatness and duration of it, *everlasting Life*; that is, for a few transient acts of Obedience, a perfect and immutable and endless state of Happiness. And these *Two* the Apostle mentions in opposition to the Inconveniences and Evil Consequences of a wicked and vicious Course; *What fruit had you then in those things? &c.*

But before I come to speak to these *Two* particulars, I shall take notice of the description which the Apostle here makes, of the change from a state of Sin and Vice to a state of Holiness and Virtue. *But now being made free from sin, and become the servants of God*; intimating that the state of Sin is a state of Servitude and Slavery, from which Repentance and the change which is thereby made does set us free; *But now being made free from sin*. And so our Saviour tells us, that *whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin*; and this is the vilest and hardest Slavery in the World, because it is the Servitude of the Soul, the best and noblest part of our selves; 'tis the subjection of our Reason, which ought to rule

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rule and bear Sway over the inferior Faculties, to our sensual Appetites and brutish Passions; which is as uncomely a sight, as to see *Beggars ride on Horse-back, and Princes walk on foot.* And as Inferiour Persons, when they are advanced to Power, are strangely Insolent and Tyrannical towards those that are subject to them; so the Lusts and Passions of men, when they once get the Command of them, are the most domineering Tyrants in the World; and there is no such Slave as a Man that is subject to his Appetite and Lust, that is under the Power of irregular Passions and vicious Inclinations, which transport and hurry him to the vilest and most unreasonable things. For a wicked Man is a Slave to as many Masters as he hath Passions and Vices; and they are very imperious and exacting, and the more he yields to them, the more they grow upon him, and exercise the greater Tyranny over him: and being subject to so many Masters, the poor Slave is continually divided and distracted between their contrary Commands and Impositions; one Passion hurries him

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one way, and another as violently drives him another; one Lust commands him upon such a Service, and another it may be at the same time calls him to another Work. His Pride and Ambition bids him spend and lay it out, whilst his Covetousness holds his Hand fast closed; so that he knows not many times how to dispose of himself or what to do, he must displease some of his Masters, and what Inclination soever he contradicts, he certainly displeaseth himself.

And that which aggravates the Misery of his Condition is, that he voluntarily submits to this Servitude. In other Cases men are made Slaves against their wills, and are brought under the Force and Power of others, whom they are not able to resist: but the sinner chuseth this Servitude, and willingly puts his neck under this yoke. There are few men in the World so sick of their Liberty, and so weary of their own Happiness, as to chuse this Condition: but the Sinner sells himself, and voluntarily parts with that Liberty, which he

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might keep, and which none could take from him.

And which makes this Condition yet more intolerable, he makes himself a Slave to his own Servants, to those who are born to be subject to him, to his own Appetites and Passions; and this certainly is the worst kind of Slavery, so much worse than that of Mines and Gallies, as the Soul is more Noble and Excellent than the Body.

Men are not usually so sensible of the Misery of this kind of Servitude, because they are govern'd by Sense more than Reason: But according to a true Judgment and Estimation of things, a Vicious Course of Life is the saddest Slavery of all others. And therefore the Gospel represents it as a design every way worthy of the Son of God, to come down from Heaven, and to debase himself so far, as to assume our Nature, and to submit to the Death of the Cross, on purpose to rescue us from this Slavery, and to assert us into *the liberty of the Sons of God*. And this is the great design of the Doctrine of

of the Gospel, to free men from the Bondage of their Lusts, and to bring them to the Service of God, *whose service is perfect freedom.* And therefore our Saviour tells us, *John 8. 31, 32.* That if we continue in his word, i. e. if we obey his Doctrine, and frame our lives according to it, it will make us free; *Ye shall know (says he) the truth, and the truth shall make you free.* And if we observe it, the Scripture delights very much to set forth to us the Benefits and Advantages of the Christian Religion by the Metaphor of Liberty and Redemption from Captivity and Slavery. Hence our Saviour is so often call'd *the Redeemer,* and *Deliverer,* and is said to have *obtained eternal Redemption for us.* And the publishing of the Gospel is compared to the Proclaiming of the year of *Jubilee* among the *Jews*, when all Persons that would were set at Liberty. *Isa. 61. 1, 2.* *The spirit of the Lord is upon me, saith the Prophet, speaking in the Person of the Messiah, because he hath anointed me to proclaim liberty to the Captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, to proclaim the acceptable Year*

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of the Lord. And it is probable that upon this account likewise the Christian Doctrine or Law is by St. James call'd *the Royal law of liberty*.

This is the great design of Christianity, to set men free from the Slavery of their Lusts ; and to this end the Apostle tells us, *Tit. 2. 13. that Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purifie to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.* And herein the great Mercy and Compassion of God towards Mankind appeared, in that he sent his Son to rescue us from that Servitude, which we had so long groaned under, *that being made free from sin, we might become the servants of God, and the servants of righteousness.*

And this he hath done not only by the price of his Blood, but by the Power and Purity of his Doctrine, and the Holy Example of his Life; and by all those Considerations which represent to us the Misery of our sinful state, and the infinite danger of continuing in it: and on the other hand, by setting before us the Advantages

vantages of a Religious and Holy Life, and what a blessed change we make, when we quit the Service of Sin, and become the Servants of God. It will not only be a mighty present Benefit to us, but will make us happy to all Eternity; and these are the *Two* Considerations which at first I propounded to speak to at this time.

First, The present Benefit of an Holy and Virtuous Life, which the Apostle here calls *Fruit*; *But now being made free from sin, and become the servants of God, ye have your fruit unto holiness.*

Secondly, The future Reward and Recompence of it; *and the End everlasting life.*

First, Let us consider the present Benefit and Advantage of an Holy and Virtuous Life, which the Apostle here calls *Fruit*. If all things be truly consider'd, there is no Advantage comes to any Man by a wicked and vicious Course of Life. A wicked Life is no present Advantage; the reflection upon it afterwards is shame-

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shameful and troublesom; and the end of it miserable. But on the contrary, the Advantages of an holy and good life are many and great even in this World, and upon temporal accounts, abstracting from the Consideration of a future Reward in the World to come.

I shall instance in *Five* or *Six* eminent Advantages, which it usually brings to men in this World.

I. It brings great Peace and Contentment of Mind.

II. It is a very fit and proper Means to promote our outward temporal Interest.

III. It tends to the lengthning our days, and hath frequently the Blessing of long Life attending upon it.

IV. It gives a Man great Peace and Comfort when he comes to die.

V. After Death it transmits a good Name and Reputation to Posterity.

VI. It

VI. It derives a Blessing upon our Posterity after us. And these are certainly the greatest Blessings that a wise Man can aim at, and design to himself in this World. Every one of these taken severally is very considerable; but all of them together compleat a Man's temporal Felicity, and raise it to as high a pitch as is to be expected in this World.

I. A Religious and Virtuous course of Life is the best way to Peace and Contentment of Mind, and does commonly bring it. And to a wise Man, that knows how to value the ease and satisfaction of his own Mind, there cannot be a greater temptation to Religion and Virtue, than to consider that it is the best and only way to give rest to his Mind. And this is present *Fruit* and ready Payment; because it immediately follows, or rather accompanies the discharge of our Duty. *The fruit of righteousness is peace*, saith the Prophet; and the Apostle to the Hebrews speaks of *the peaceable fruits of righteousness*, meaning that inward Peace which

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which a Righteous Man hath in his own Mind.

A Man needs not to take pains, or to use many Arguments, to satisfy and content his own Mind, after he hath done a good Action, and to convince himself, that he hath no cause to be troubled for it; for Peace and Pleasure do naturally spring from it: Nay, not only so, but there is an unexpressible kind of pleasure and delight, that flows from the testimony of a good Conscience. Let but a Man take care to satisfy himself in the doing of his Duty, and whatever troubles and storms may be raised from without, all will be clear and calm within: For nothing but guilt can trouble a Man's Mind, and fright his Conscience, and make him uneasy to himself; *that* indeed will wound his Spirit, and sting his very Soul, and make him full of fearful and tormenting thoughts. This *Cain* found after he had committed that crying sin of Murdering his Brother. *Gen. 4. 6. The Lord said unto Cain, why art thou wroth? and why is thy Countenance fall'n?* His guilt made him full of wrath, and discontent fill'd his

his Mind with vexation, and his Countenance with shame and confusion. When a Man's conscience is awakened to a sense of his guilt, it is angry and froward, and harder to be still'd than a peevish Child : But the practice of Holiness and Virtue does produce just the contrary effects ; it fills a Man's Mind with Pleasure, and makes his Countenance chearful.

And this certainly, if it be well consider'd, is no small and contemptible advantage. The peace and tranquillity of our Minds is the great thing, which all the Philosophy and Wisdom of the World did always design to bring men to, as the very utmost happiness that a Wise Man is capable of in this Life ; and 'tis that which no considerate Man would part with, for all that this World can give him. The greatest fortune in this World ought to be no temptation to any Man in his Wits, to submit to perpetual Sicknes and Pain for the gaining of it ; and yet there is no disease in the World, that for the sharpness of it is comparable to the sting of a guilty Mind, and no pleasure equal to that of Innocence and

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and a good Conscience. And this naturally springs up in the Mind of a good Man, where it is not hindred either by a melancholy Temper, or by false Principles in Religion, which fill a Man with groundless fears and jealousies of the love and favour of God towards him; and excepting these two cases, this is the ordinary fruit of an holy and good course, which is not interrupted by frequent falling into sin, and great omissions and violations of our duty: For in this case the interruptions of our Peace and Comfort will naturally be answerable to the inequality of our Obedience.

II. Besides the present and inestimable Fruit of Holiness, the quiet and satisfaction of our own Minds; it is likewise a proper means to promote our Interest and Happiness in this World. For as every Vice is naturally attended with some Temporal Inconvenience of Pain or Loss; so there is no Grace or Virtue, but does apparently conduce to a Man's temporal Felicity. There are some Virtues which tend to the health of his Body, and the prolonging of his Life, as
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Temperance and Chastity ; others tend to Riches and Plenty, as Diligence and Industry in our callings ; others to the secure and peaceable Enjoyment of what we have, as Truth and Fidelity, Justice and Honesty in all our dealings and intercourse with men. There are other Virtues that are apt to oblige Mankind to us, and to gain their Friendship and good Will, their Aid and Assistance, as Kindness, and Meekness, and Charity, and a generous Disposition to do good to all, as far as we have Power and Opportunity. In a word, there is no real Interest of this World, but may ordinarily be as effectually promoted and pursued to as great Advantage, by a Man that exercises himself in the Practice of all Virtue and Goodness, and usually to far greater Advantage, than by one that is Intemperate and Debauch'd, Deceitful and Dishonest, apt to disoblige and provoke, sour and ill-natur'd to all Mankind: For there is none of these Vices, but is to a Man's real hinderance and disadvantage, in regard of one kind of Happiness or another, which men aim at and

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III. A Religious and Virtuous Course of Life doth naturally tend to the prolonging of our days, and hath very frequently the Blessing of Health and long Life attending upon it. The Practice of a great many Virtues is a great Preservative of Life and Health, as the due government of our Appetites and Passions, by Temperance and Chastity and Meekness, which prevent the chief Causes from within of Bodily Diseases and Distempers; the due government of our Tongues and Conversation in respect of others, by Justice and Kindness, and abstaining from Wrath and Provocation, which are a great security against the dangers of outward Violence, according to that of St. Peter, 1 Epist. 3. 10. *He that will love life and see good days, let him refrain his Tongue from evil, and his Lips that they speak no guile; let him eschew evil, and do good, let him seek peace and ensue it.*

And beside the natural tendency of things, there is a special Blessing of God,

God, which attends good men, and makes *their days long in the land which the Lord their God hath given them.*

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IV. There is nothing gives a Man so much Comfort when he comes to die, as the reflection upon an holy and good Life: and then surely above all other times Comfort is most valuable, because our frail and infirm Nature doth then stand most in need of it. Then usually mens Hearts are faint and their Spirits low, and every thing is apt to deject and trouble them; so that we had need to provide ourselves of some excellent Cordial against that time; and there is no Comfort like to that of a clear Conscience, and of an innocent and useful Life. This will revive and raise a Man's Spirits under all the Infirmities of his Body, because it gives a Man good hopes concerning his Eternal State, and the hopes of that are apt to fill a Man with *Joy unspeakable and full of glory.*

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this World as when they are upon their Death-Bed. This the Scripture observes to us, *Psal. 37. 37. Mark the perfect Man, and behold the upright, for the end of that Man is peace.*

With what Triumph and Exultation doth the Blessed Apostle St. Paul, upon the review of his Life, discourse concerning his Death and Dissolution? *2 Tim. 4. 6, 7, 8. I am now ready, says he, to be offered up, and the time of my departure is at hand: I have fought a good fight, I have finish'd my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me at that day.* What would not any of us do to be thus affected when we come to leave the World, and to be able to bear the thoughts of Death and Eternity with so quiet and well satisfi'd a Mind! Why, let us but endeavour to live Holy lives, and to be useful and serviceable to God in our Generation, as this holy Apostle was, and we shall have the same ground of Joy and Triumph which he had. For this is the proper and genuine effect of Virtue

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and Goodness; *The work of righteousness is peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.*

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All the good Actions that we do in this Life are so many seeds of Comfort sown in our own Consciences, which will spring up one time or other, but especially in the approaches of Death, when we come to take a serious review of our lives; for then mens Consciences use to deal plainly and impartially with them, and to tell them the truth; and if at that time more especially *our hearts condemn us not, then may we have comfort and confidence towards God.*

V. An Holy and Virtuous Life doth transmit a good Name and Reputation to Posterity. And this Solomon hath determined to be a much greater Happiness, than for a Man to leave a great Estate behind him: *A good name, says he, is rather to be chosen than great riches.* Pious and Virtuous men do commonly gain to themselves a good Esteem and Reputation in this World, while they are in it; but the Virtues of good men are not always so bright and shining, as to meet with that

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respect and acknowledgment which is due to them in this World. Many times they are much clouded by the Infirmities and Passions which attend them, and are shadowed by some affected singularities and morosities, which those which have liv'd more retir'd from the World are more liable to. Besides that the Envy of others, who are not so good as they, lies heavy upon them, and does depress them. For bad men are very apt to misinterpret the best Actions of the good, and put false colours upon them, and when they have nothing else to object against them, to charge them with Hypocrisie and Insincerity; an objection as hard to be answer'd, as it is to be made good, unless we could see into the Hearts of men.

But when good men are dead and gone, and the bright and shining Example of their Virtues is at a convenient distance, and does not gall and upbraid others, then Envy ceaseth, and every Man is then content to give a good Man his due Praise, and his Friends and Posterity may then

then quietly enjoy the Comfort of his Reputation, which is some sort of Blessing to him that is gone. This difference Solomon observes to us between good and bad men; *The memory of the just is blessed, or well spoken of: but the name of the wicked shall rot.*

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VI. And lastly, Religion and Virtue do derive a Blessing upon our Posterity after us. *Oh, that there were such an heart in them,* saith Moses concerning the People of Israel, *that they would fear me, and keep all my Commandments always, that it might be well with them and with their Children for ever!* And to this purpose there are many Promises in Scripture of God's blessing the Posterity of the righteous, and his shewing mercies to thousands of the Children of them that love him, and keep his Commandments.

And this is a great motive to Obedience, and toucheth upon that Natural Affection which men bear to their Children; so that if we have any Regard to them, or Concernment for their Happiness, we ought to be

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very careful of our Duty, and afraid to offend God; because according as we demean our selves towards him, we entail a lasting Blessing or a great Curse upon our Children; by so many and so strong bonds hath God tyed our Duty upon us, that if we either desire our own Happiness, or the Happiness of those that are dearest to us, and part of our selves, we must *fear God and keep his Commandments.*

And thus I have briefly represented to you, some of the chief Benefits and Advantages which an Holy and Virtuous life does commonly bring to men in this World, which is the *first* Encouragement mention'd in the Text; *Ye have your fruit unto holiness.*

Before I proceed to the *Second*, I shall only just take notice, by way of Application, of what hath been said on this Argument.

1. That it is a great Encouragement to well-doing, to consider that ordinarily Piety and Goodness are no hinderance to a Man's temporal Felicity, but very frequently great promoters

ters of it; so that excepting only the case of Persecution for Religion, I think I may safely challenge any Man, to shew me how the Practice of any Part or Duty of Religion, how the exercise of any Grace or Virtue is to the prejudice of a Man's temporal Interest, or does debar him of any true Pleasure, or hinder him of any real Advantage, which a prudent and considerate Man would think fit to chuse. And as for Persecution and Sufferings for Religion, God can reward us for them, if he please, in this World; and we have all the assurance that we can desire, that he will do it abundantly in the next.

2. The hope of long Life, and especially of a quiet and comfortable Death, should be a great encouragement to an Holy and Virtuous Life. He that lives well, takes the best course to live long, and lays in for an happy old Age, free from the Diseases and Infirmities which are naturally procur'd by a vicious Youth, and likewise free from the guilt and galling Remembrance of a wicked Life. And there is no condition, which we can fall into in this

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World, that does so clearly discover the difference between a good and bad Man, as a Death-bed: For then the good Man begins most sensibly to enjoy the comforts of Well-doing, and the Sinner to taste the bitter fruits of Sin. What a wide difference is then to be seen, between the hopes and fears of these two sorts of persons! And surely next to the actual possession of Blessedness, the good hopes and comfortable prospect of it, are the greatest Happiness; and next to the actual sense of Pain, the fear of Suffering is the greatest Torment.

Tho' there were nothing beyond this Life to be expected, yet if men were sure to be possess'd with these delightful or troublesome Passions when they come to die, no Man that wisely considers things would, for all the Pleasures of sin, forfeit the Comfort of a Righteous Soul, leaving this World full of the hope of Immortality; and endure the vexation and anguish of a guilty Conscience, and that infinite terror and amazement which so frequently possesseth the Soul of a dying Sinner.

3. If there be any spark of a generous mind in us, it should animate us to do well, that we may be well spoken of when we are gone off the Stage, and may transmit a grateful Memory of our lives to those that shall be after us. I proceed now to the

Second Thing I proposed, as the great Advantage indeed, *Viz.* The glorious Reward of a Holy and Virtuous Life in another World, which is here called *everlasting Life*; And the end *everlasting Life*: by which the Apostle intends to express to us, both the Happiness of our future State, and the Way and Means whereby we are prepared and made meet to be made partakers of it; and that is by the constant and sincere Endeavours of an holy and good Life. For 'tis they only that *have their fruit unto holiness*, whose end shall be *everlasting Life*. I shall speak briefly to these two, and so conclude my discourse upon this Text.

I. The Happiness of our future state, which is here exprest by the name of *everlasting Life*; in very few words, but such

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such as are of wonderful weight and significance: For they import the Excellency of this state, and the Eternity of it. And who is sufficient to speak to either of these Arguments? Both of them are too big to enter now into the heart of Man, too vast and boundless to be comprehended by humane understanding, and too unweildy to be manag'd by the Tongue of Men and Angels, answerable to the unspeakable greatness and glory of them. And if I were able to declare them unto you, as they deserv'd, you would not be able to hear me. And therefore I shall chuse to say but little upon an Argument, of which I can never say enough, and shall very briefly consider those *two* things which are comprehended in that short description, which the Text gives us of our future Happiness, by the name of *everlasting Life*, viz. The Excellency of this state, and the Eternity of it.

1. The Excellency of it, which is here represented to us under the notion of *Life*, the most desirable of all other things, because it is the Foundation of all other Enjoyments whatsoever. Barely to be in being, and to be sensible that

that we are so, is but a dry Notion of Life. The true Notion of Life is to be well and to be happy, *vivere est bene valere*. They who are in the most miserable condition that can be imagin'd, are in being, and sensible also that they are miserable. But this kind of Life is so far from coming under the true Notion of Life, that the Scripture calls it *the second death*. Revel. 21. 8. it is there said, that *The wicked shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death*. And, Chap. 20. ver. 6. *Blessed and holy is he, that hath part in the first Resurrection, on such the second death shall have no power*. So that a state of meer misery and torment is not Life but Death; nay the Scripture will not allow the Life of a wicked Man in this World to be true Life, but speaks of him as dead. Ephes. 2. 1. speaking of the sinners among the Gentiles, *You, saith the Apostle, hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins*. And which is more yet, the Scripture calls a Life of sinful Pleasures (which men esteem the only Happiness of this world) the Scripture, I say, calls this a Death, 1 Tim. 5. 6. *She that liveth in pleasures, is dead whilst she*

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ſhe liveth. A lewd and unprofitable Life, which ſerves to no good end and purpoſe, is a Death rather than a Life. Nay, that decaying and dying Life which we now live in this World, and which is allayed by the mixture of ſo many infirmities and pains, of ſo much trouble and ſorrow; I ſay, that even this ſort of Life, for all that we are ſo fondly in love with it, does hardly deſerve the name of Life. But the Life of the World to come, of which we now ſpeak, this is Life indeed; to do thoſe things which we were made for, to ſerve the true Ends of our Being, and to enjoy the Comfort and Reward of ſo doing, this is the true notion of Life; and whatever is leſs than this, is Death, or a degree of it, and approach towards it. And therefore very well may Heaven and Happineſs be deſcrib'd by the notion of Life, becauſe *truly to live* and *to be happy* are words that ſignifie the ſame thing.

But what kind of Life this is, I can no more deſcribe to you in the particularities of it, than *Columbus* could have deſcribed the particular Manners and Customs of the People of *America*, before he or any other perſon in theſe parts

parts of the World, had seen it or been there. But this I can say of it in general, and that from the infallible testimony of the great Creator and glorious Inhabitants of that Blessed place, that it is a state of pure Pleasure and unmingled Joys, of Pleasures more manly, more spiritual, and more refined, than any of the Delights of sense, consisting in the enlargement of our Minds and Knowledge to a greater degree, and in the perfect exercise of Love and Friendship, in the Conversation of the best and wisest Company, free from self-interest, and all those unfociable passions of Envy, and Jealousie, of Malice and Ill-will, which spoil the Comfort of all Conversation in this World; and, in a word, free from all other Passion or Design, but an ardent and almost equal desire to contribute all, that by all means possible they can, to the mutual Happiness of one another: For Charity reigns in Heaven, and is the brightest Grace and Virtue in the Firmament of Glory, far outshining all other; as St. Paul, who had himself been taken up into the third Heaven, does expressly declare to us.

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Farther yet, this blessed state consists more particularly in these two things: In having our Bodies raised and refined to a far greater Purity and Perfection, than ever they had in this World; and in the consequent Happiness of the whole Man, Soul and Body, so strictly and firmly united as never to be parted again, and so equally match'd as to be no trouble or impediment to one another.

(1.) In having our Bodies raised and refined to a far greater Purity and Perfection, than ever they had in this World. Our Bodies as they are now are unequally tempered, and in a perpetual flux and change, continually tending to Corruption, because made up of such contrary Principles and Qualities, as by their perpetual conflict are always at work, conspiring the Ruin and Dissolution of them; but when they are raised again, they shall be so temper'd and so refin'd, as to be free from all those destructive Qualities, which do now threaten their change and dissolution: and tho' they shall still consist of Matter,

yet they shall be purified to that degree, as to partake of the Immortality of our Souls, to which they shall be united, and to be of equal duration with them. So the Scripture tells us, 1 Cor. 15. 52, 53. *That our dead Bodies shall be raised incorruptible: for this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.*

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Our Bodies when they are laid down in the Grave are vile Carcasses, but they shall be raised again Beautiful and Glorious, and as different from what they were before, as the Heavenly Mansions in which they are to reside for ever are from that dark Cell of the Grave out of which they are raised; and shall then be endowed with such a Life and Strength and Vigour, as to be able without any change or decay to abide and continue for ever in the same state.

Our Bodies in this World are gross Flesh and Blood, liable to be affected with natural and sensual Pleasures, and to be afflicted with natural Pains and Diseases, to be preſt with

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with the natural necessities of Hunger and Thirst, and obnoxious to all those Changes and Accidents to which all natural things are subject : But *they shall be raised spiritual bodies*, pure and refin'd from all the dregs of Matter ; they shall not hunger, nor thirst, nor be diseased, or in Pain any more.

These Houses of Clay, whose Foundation is in the dust, are continually decaying, and therefore stand in need of continual Reparation by Food and Physick : but *our House which is from Heaven*, (as the Apostle calls it) shall be of such lasting and durable Materials, as not only Time, but even Eternity it self, shall make no impression upon it, or cause the least decay in it. *They* (says our Blessed Saviour) *who shall be accounted worthy to obtain that World, and the Resurrection from the dead, cannot die any more : but shall be like the Angels, and are the children of God, i. e. shall in some degree partake of the Felicity and Immortality of God himself, who is always the same, and whose years fail not.* Nay, the Apostle expressly tells us, that our Bodies after the Resurrection shall be *spiritual*

Spiritual Bodies, so that we shall then be as it were all Spirit, and our Bodies shall be so raised and refined, that they shall be no clog or impediment to the Operation of our Souls. And it must needs be a great comfort to us whilst we are in this World, to live in the hopes of so happy and glorious a change; when we consider how our Bodies do now oppress our Spirits, and what a melancholy and dead weight they are upon them, how grievous an Incumbrance and Trouble and Temptation they are for the most part to us in this mortal state.

(2.) The blessedness of this state consists likewise in the consequent Happiness of the whole Man, Soul and Body, so strictly and firmly united as never to be parted again, and so equally matched as to be no trouble and impediment to one another.

In this World the Soul and Body are for the most part very unequally yoked, so that the Soul is not only darkened by the gross Fumes and Clouds which rise from the Body, but loaded and oppressed by the dull weight of it, which it very heavily lugs on and draws af-

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ter it ; and the Soul likewise, and the vicious Inclinations and irregular Passions of it, have many times an ill influence upon the Body and the Humors of it. But in the next World they shall both be purified, the one from Sin, and the other from Frailty and Corruption, and both be admitted to the blessed sight and enjoyment of the ever blessed God.

But the Consideration of this, (as I said before) is too big for our narrow apprehensions in this mortal state, and an Argument not fit to be treated of by such Children, as the wisest of men are in this World ; and whenever we attempt to speak of it, we do but lisp like Children, and understand like Children, and reason like Children about it. *That which is imperfect must be done away*, and our Souls must be raised to a greater Perfection, and our Understandings fill'd with a stronger and steadier Light, before we can be fit to engage in so profound a Contemplation. We must first have been in Heaven, and possess of that Felicity and Glory which is there to be enjoyed, before

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we can either speak or think of it in any measure as it deserves. In the mean time, whenever we set about it, we shall find our Faculties oppressed and dazzled with the weight and splendor of so great and glorious an Argument; like St. Paul, who, when *he was caught up into Paradise*, saw and heard those things which when he came down again into this World, he was not able to express, and which it was not possible for the Tongue of man to utter.

So that in discoursing of the state of the Blessed, we must content ourselves with what the Scripture hath revealed in general concerning it; that it is a state of perfect freedom from all those Infirmities and Imperfections, those Evils and Miseries, those Sins and Temptations which we are liable to in this World. So St. John describes the Glory and Felicity of that state, as they were in Visions represented to him, Rev. 21. 2, 3, 4. *And I John saw the holy City, the new Jerusalem, prepared as a Bride adorned for her Husband. And I heard a great voice out of Heaven, saying, Behold! the Tabernacle of God is with men, and he will*

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dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away; that is, all those Evils which we saw or suffered in this World, shall for ever vanish and disappear, and, which is the great Privilege and Felicity of all, that there shall no Sin be there, v. 27. There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, and consequently there shall be no Misery and Curse there. So we read, Chap. 22. 3, 4. And there shall be no more curse; but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall serve him, and they shall see his face. In which last words our Employment and our Happiness are exprest; but what in particular our Employment shall be, and wherein it shall consist, is impossible now to describe; it is sufficient to know in the general, that our Employment shall be our unspeakable Pleasure, and every way suitable to the Glory and Happiness of that state, and as much

much above the noblest and most delightful Employments of this World, as the Perfection of our Bodies, and the Powers of our Souls, shall then be above what they are now in this World.

Serm. 8.

For there is no doubt, but that he who made us, and endued our Souls with a desire of Immortality, and so large a Capacity of Happiness, does understand very well by what way and means to make us happy, and hath in readiness proper Exercises and Employments for that state, and every way more fitted to make us Happy, than any Condition or Employment in this World is suitable to a temporal Happiness; Employments that are suitable to *the spirits of just men made perfect*, united to Bodies purified and refined almost to the Condition of Spirits; Employments which we shall be so far from being weary of, that they shall minister to us a new and fresh delight to all Eternity; and this perhaps, not so much from the variety, as from the perpetual and growing Pleasure of them.

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It is sufficient for us to know this in the general, and to trust the infinite Power and Wisdom and Goodness of God, for the particular manner and circumstances of our Happiness; not doubting but that he, who is the eternal and inexhaustible Spring and Fountain of all Happiness, can and will derive and convey such a share of it to every one of us as he thinks fit, and in such ways as he, who best understands it, is best able to find out.

In a word, the Happiness of the next Life shall be such as is worthy of the great King of the World to bestow upon his faithful Servants, and such as is infinitely beyond the just Reward of their best Services; it is *to see God, i. e. to contemplate and love the best and most perfect of Beings, and to be for ever with the Lord, in whose presence is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand there are pleasures for evermore.*

I will say no more upon this Argument, lest I should say less, and
because

because whoever ventures to wade far into it, will soon find himself out of his depth, and in danger to be swallowed up and lost in that great Abyſs, which is not to be fathom'd by the ſhallow Faculties of Mortal men. Serm.8.

I ſhall therefore only mention the

2. Thing I propoſed to ſpeak to, *viz.* The Eternity of this Happineſs; *And the end everlaſting Life:* by which the Apoſtle intends to expreſs the utmoſt Perfection, but not the final Period of the Happineſs of good men in another World. For to a perfect ſtate of Happineſs theſe two Conditions are requiſite, that it be immutable, and that it be interminable, that it can neither admit of a change nor of an end. And this is all that I ſhall ſay of it, it being impoſſible to ſay any thing that is more intelligible and plain, concerning that which is infinite, than that it is ſo. I ſhould now have proceeded to the

II. Thing I propoſed, *viz.* By what Way and Means we may be prepared, and made meet to be made partakers

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partakers of this Happiness; and that is (as I have told you all along) by the constant and sincere endeavour of an holy and good Life; for the Text supposeth that they only who are *made free from Sin, and become the Servants of God, and who have their Fruit unto Holiness,* are they whose *end shall be everlasting Life.* But this is an Argument which I have had so frequent occasion to speak to, that I shall not now meddle with it. All that I shall do more at present shall be to make an Inference or two from what hath been said upon this Argument.

I. The Consideration of the Happy State of good men in another World, cannot but be a great comfort and support to good men under all the Evils and Sufferings of this present Life. Hope is a great Cordial to the Minds of men, especially when the thing hoped for does so vastly outweigh the present grievance and trouble. The Holy Scriptures, which reveal to us the Happiness of our future state, do likewise assure us that there is no comparison between the Afflictions and

and Sufferings of good men in this World, and the Reward of them in the other. *I reckon (saith St. Paul) Rom. 8. 8. that the sufferings of this present time, are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.*

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Serm. 8.

Particularly the Consideration of that glorious change which shall be made in our Bodies at the Resurrection, ought to be a great comfort to us under all the Pains and Diseases which they are now liable to, and even against Death it self. One of the greatest burdens of Humane Nature, is the frailty and infirmity of our Bodies, the necessities which they are frequently prest withal, the Diseases and Pains to which they are liable, and *the fear of death*, by reason whereof a great part of Mankind are *subject to bondage*; against all which this is an everlasting Spring of Consolation to us, that the time is coming when we shall have other sort of Bodies, freed from that burden of Corruption which we now groan under, and from all those Miseries and Inconveniences which Flesh and Blood are

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are now subject to. For the time will come, when *these vile Bodies*, which we now wear, *shall be changed, and fashioned like to the glorious Body of the Son of God*; and when they shall be raised at the last day, they shall not be raised such as we laid them down, Vile and Corruptible, but Immortal and Incorruptible: for the same Power which hath raised them up to Life, shall likewise change them, and put a glory upon them like to that of the glorified Body of our Lord; and when this glorious change is made, *when this corruptible hath put on incorruption, and this mortal hath put on immortality*, then shall come to pass the saying that is written, *Death is swallowed up in victory*; and when this *last enemy* is perfectly subdued, we shall be set above all the Frailties and Dangers, all the Temptations and Sufferings of this mortal state; there will then be no *fleshly lusts* and brutish Persons *to war against the Soul*; no *law in our members* to rise up in Rebellion against *the law of our minds*; no Diseases to torment us, no danger of Death to terrifie us; all the Motions and Passions of our outward

ward Man shall then be perfectly subject to the Reason of our Minds, and our Bodies shall partake of the Immortality of our Souls. How should this Consideration bear us up under all the Evils of Life and the fears of Death, that the Resurrection will be a perfect Cure of all our Infirmities and Diseases, and an effectual Remedy of all the Evils that we now labour under; and that it is but a very little while that we shall be troubled with these Frail, and Mortal, and Vile Bodies, which shall shortly be laid in the dust, and when they are raised again, shall become Spiritual, Incorruptible, and Glorious.

And if our Bodies shall undergo so happy a change, what Happiness may we imagine shall then be conferr'd upon our Souls, that so much better and nobler part of our selves! As the Apostle reasons in another Case, *Doth God take care of Oxen?* Hath he this Consideration of our Bodies, which are but the brutish part of the Man? What regard will he then have to his own Image, that spark of Divinity which is for ever to reside in these Bodies?



Vol. 8. Bodies? If upon the account of our Souls, and for their sakes, our Bodies shall become *Incorruptible, Spiritual and Glorious*; then certainly our Souls shall be endued with far more Excellent and Divine Qualities: if our Bodies shall in some degree partake of the Perfection of our Souls in their Spiritual and Immortal Nature; to what a pitch of Perfection shall our Souls be raised and advanced! even to an equality with Angels, and to some kind of participation of the Divine Nature and Perfection, so far as a Creature is capable of them.

II. The Comparison which is here in the Text, and which I have largely explain'd, between the manifest Inconveniences of a Sinful and Vicious Course, and the manifold Advantages of an Holy and Virtuous Life, is a plain direction to us which of these two to chuse. So that I may make the same appeal that *Moses* does, after that he had at large declared the Blessings promis'd to the Obedience of God's Laws, and the Curse denounc'd against the Violation and Transgression of them, *Deut. 30. 19. I call Heaven and Earth*

to record against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore chuse life, that you may be happy in Life and Death, and after Death to all Eternity. I know every one is ready to chuse Happiness, and to say with Balaam, Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my latter end be like his: but if we do in good earnest desire the End, we must take the Way that leads to it; we must become the Servants of God, and have our fruit unto holiness, if ever we expect, that the end shall be everlasting life.

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# SERMON IX.

The Nature and Necessity of  
holy Resolution.

The First Sermon on this Text:

JOB XXXIV. 31, 32.

*Surely it is meet to be said unto God,  
I have born chastisement, I will not  
offend any more: That which I see  
not, teach thou me; if I have done  
iniquity, I will do no more.*

**T**HESE words are the words  
of Elihu, one of Job's Friends,  
and the only one who is not reprov-  
ed for his Discourse with Job, and  
who was probably the Author of  
this antient and most eloquent Histo-  
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ry of the sufferings and patience of Job, and of the end which the Lord made with him; and they contain in them a Description of the temper and behaviour of a true Penitent. Surely it is meet, &c.

In which words we have the Two essential parts of a true Repentance.

*First, An humble Acknowledgment and Confession of our Sins to God, Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have born chastisement.*

*Secondly, A firm Purpose and Resolution of amendment and forsaking of Sin for the future, I will not offend any more; if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.*

*First, An humble Acknowledgment and Confession of our Sins to God, Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have born chastisement, that is, have sinned and been justly punish'd for it, and am now convinced of the Evil of Sin, and resolved to leave it; I have born chastisement, I will offend no more.*

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Of this *First* part of Repentance, *viz.* an humble Confession of our Sins to God, with great Shame and Sorrow for them, and a thorow Conviction of the Evil and Danger of a sinful Course, I have already treated at large. In these Repentance must begin, but it must not end in them: for a penitent Confession of our Sins to God, and a Conviction of the evil of them, signifies nothing, unless it bring us to a Resolution of amendment, that is, of leaving our Sins, and betaking our selves to a better Course, And this I intend, by God's assistance, to speak to now, as being the

*Second Part* of a true Repentance here described in the Text, *viz.* A firm Purpose and Resolution of amendment and forsaking of Sin for the future; and to exprefs it the more strongly and emphatically, and to shew the firmness of the Resolution, it is repeated again, *I will not offend any more*; and then in the next verse, *If I have done iniquity, I will do no more.* And this is so necessary a part of Repentance, that herein the very essence  
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and formal Nature of Repentance does consist, *viz.* in the firm and sincere Purpose and Resolution of a better Course.

In the handling of this Argument, I shall do these *Six* things.

I. I shall shew what Resolution is in general.

II. What is the special Object of this kind of Resolution.

III. What is implied in a sincere Resolution of leaving our Sins and returning to God.

IV. I shall shew that in this Resolution of amendment, the very Essence and formal Nature of Repentance does consist.

V. I shall offer some Considerations to convince men, both of the necessity and fitness of this Resolution, and of keeping stedfastly to it. *Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I will not offend any more.*

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VI. I shall add some brief directions concerning the managing and maintaining of this holy and necessary Resolution.

I. What Resolution in general is. It is a fixt Determination of the Will about any thing, either to do it, or not to do it, as upon due deliberation we have judged and concluded it to be necessary or convenient to be done, or not to be done by us: And this supposeth *three* things.

1. Resolution supposeth a precedent deliberation of the Mind about the thing to be resolved upon. For no prudent Man does determine or resolve upon any thing, till he have considered the thing, and weighed it well with himself, and have fully debated the necessity and expedience of it; what advantage he shall have by the doing of it, and what danger and inconvenience will certainly or very probably redound to him by the neglect and omission of it. For peremptorily to determine and resolve upon any thing, before a Man have done this, is not properly

Vol. 8. properly Resolution; but precipitancy and rashness.

2. Resolution supposeth some Judgment past upon the thing, after a Man hath thus deliberated about it; that he is satisfied in his Mind one way or other concerning it, that his Understanding is convinced either that it is necessary and convenienc for him to do it, or that it is not; and this is sometimes call'd Resolution, but is not that Resolution which immediately determines a man to action. This Judgment of the necessity and fitness of the thing, is not the Resolution of the Will, but of the Understanding; for it does not signifie that a Man hath fully determined to do the thing, but that he hath determined with himself that it is reasonable to be done, and that he is no longer in doubt and suspense whether it be best for him to do it or not, but is in his Mind resolved and satisfied one way or other. And these are two very different things; to be resolved in one's Judgment, that is, to be convinced that a thing is fit and necessary to be done; and to be resolved to



set upon the doing of it; for many men are thus convinced of the fitness and necessity of the thing, who yet have not the heart, cannot bring themselves to a firm and fixt Resolution to set upon the doing of it. So that an act of the Judgment, must go before the Resolution of the Will: for as he is rash that resolves to do a thing before he hath deliberated about it; so he is blind and wilful that resolves to do a thing before his Judgment be satisfied, whether it be best for him to do it or not.

3. If the matter be of considerable moment and consequence, Resolution supposeth some motion of the Affections; which is a kind of Bias upon the Will, a certain Propension and Inclination that a Man feels in himself, either urging him to do a thing, or withdrawing him from it. Deliberation and Judgment they direct a Man what to do, or leave undone; the Affections excite and quicken a Man to take some Resolution in the matter, that is, to do suitably to the Judgment his Mind hath past upon the thing. For instance; A great

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sinner reflects upon his Life, and considers what he hath done, what the Course is that he lives in, and what the issue and consequence of it will probably or certainly be, whether it will make him happy or miserable in the conclusion; and debating the Matter calmly and soberly with himself, he is satisfied and convinced of the Evil and Danger of a wicked Life, and consequently that it is best for him to resolve upon a better Course, that is, to repent. Now these thoughts must needs awaken in him fearful apprehensions of the wrath of Almighty God, which is due to him for his Sins and hangs over him, and which he is every moment in danger of, if he goes on in his Evil Course. These thoughts are apt likewise to fill him with Shame and Confusion, at the remembrance of his horrible Ingratitude to God his Maker, his best Friend and greatest Benefactor, and of his desperate Folly in provoking Omnipotent Justice against himself; whereupon he is heartily grieved and troubled for what he hath done; and these Affections of Fear and Shame and Sorrow being once up, they come with

with great violence upon the Will, and urge the Man to a speedy Resolution of changing his Course, and leaving the Way he is in, which he is fully convinced is so Evil and Dangerous; and of betaking himself to another Course, which he is fully satisfied will be much more for his Safety and Advantage.

Serm. 9.

So that Resolution in general, is a fixt Determination of the Will; that is, such a Determination as is not only for the present free from all wavering and doubting, but such as cannot prudently be altered, so long as the reason remains. For the Man who upon full Deliberation and Conviction of his Mind resolves upon any thing, cannot without the imputation of fickleness and inconstancy quit that Resolution, so long as he hath the same Reason which he had when he took it up, and is still satisfied that the Reason is good. For instance; The Man who hath taken up a Resolution to be Sober, because of the ugliness and unreasonableness of Drunkenness, and the temporal Inconveniences and Eternal Damnati-



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on which that Sin exposeth a Man to; if these Reasons be true and good, can never prudently alter the Resolution which he hath taken, and return to that Sin again.

II. Let us consider what is the special Object or Matter of this Resolution, wherein the formal Nature of Repentance does consist, what it is that a Man when he repents resolves upon; and that I told you is to leave his Sin, and to return to God and his Duty; and this is the Resolution which the Penitent here described in the Text takes up, *I will not offend any more. That which I see not, teach thou me; and if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.* He resolves against all known Sin, *I will not offend any more*; and if through Ignorance he had sinned and done contrary to his Duty, he desires to be better instructed, that he may not offend again in the like kind, *That which I see not, teach thou me; and if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.*

So that the true Penitent resolves upon these two things.

I. To

1. To forsake his Sin. And
2. To return to God and his Duty.

1. To forsake his Sin : and this implies the quitting of his sinful Course whatever it had been ; and that not only by abstaining from the outward act and practice of every Sin, but by endeavouring to crucifie and subdue the inward Affection and Inclination to it.

And it implies farther, the utter forsaking of Sin ; for Repentance is not only a Resolution to abstain from Sin for the present, but never to return to it again. Thus *Ephraim* when he repented of his Idolatry, he utterly renounced it, saying, *What have I to do any more with Idols ?* Hos. 14. 8. He that truly repents, is resolved to break off his sinful Course, and to abandon those Lusts and Vices which he was formerly addicted to, and lived in.

2. The true Penitent resolves likewise to return to God and his Duty :  
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he does not stay in the negative part of Religion, he does not only resolve not to commit any Sin, but not to neglect or omit any thing that he knows to be his Duty; and if he has been ignorant of any part of his Duty, he is willing to know it, that he may do it; he is not only determined to forsake his Sin, which will make him miserable, but to return to God, who alone can make him happy: he is now resolved to love God, and to serve him as much as he hated and dishonoured him before; and will now be as diligent to perform and practise all the Duties and Parts of Religion, as he was negligent of them before, and as ready to do all the good he can to all men in any kind, as he was careless of these things before: these in general are the things which a true Penitent resolves upon. I proceed to the

III. Thing I proposed to consider, namely what is implied in a sincere Resolution of leaving our Sins, and returning to God and our Duty. And this holy Resolution, if it be thorough and sincere, does imply in it these *three* things.

I. That



1. That it be Universal.
2. That it be a Resolution of the Means as well as of the End.
3. That it presently comes to effect, and be speedily and without delay put in Execution.

1. A sincere Resolution of amendment must be universal: a Resolution to forsake all Sin, and to return to our whole Duty, and every part of it; such a Resolution as that of holy David, *to hate every false way, and to have respect to all God's Commandments.*

This Resolution must be universal in respect of the whole Man, and with regard to all our Actions. In respect of the whole Man; for we must resolve not only to abstain from the outward Action of Sin, but this Resolution must have its effect upon our inward Man, and reach our very hearts and thoughts; it must restrain our inclinations, and *mortifie our lusts and corrupt affections, and renew us in the*

Vol. 8. *the very spirit of our minds, as the Apostle expresses it.*

And it must be universal, in respect of all our Actions. For this is not the Resolution of a sincere Penitent, to abstain only from gross and notorious, from scandalous and open Sins; but likewise to refrain from the Commission of those Sins which are small in the esteem of men, and not branded with a Mark of publick Infamy and Reproach; to forbear Sin in secret, and when no Eye of Man sees us and takes notice of us. This is not a sincere Resolution, to resolve to practise the Duties and Virtues of Religion in publick, and to neglect them in private; to resolve to perform the Duties of the first Table, and to pass by those of the second; to resolve to serve God, and to take a liberty to defraud and cozen men; to honour our Father which is in Heaven, and to injure and hate our Brethren upon Earth; *to love our Neighbour, and to hate our Enemy, as the Jews did of old time; to resolve against Swearing, and to allow our selves the liberty to speak falsely, and to break*  
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our Word; to flee from Superstition, and to run into Faction; *to abhor Idols, and to commit Sacrilege;* to resolve to be devout at Church, and deceitful in our Shops; to be very scrupulous about lesser matters, and to be very zealous about indifferent things; *to tithe mint and anise and cummin, and to omit the weightier matters of the Law, Mercy and Fidelity and Justice;* to be very rigid in matters of Faith and Opinion, but loose in Life and Practice.

No; the Resolution of a sincere Penitent must be universal and uniform: it must extend alike to the forbearing of all Sin, and the exercise of every Grace and Virtue, and to the due Practice and Performance of every part of our Duty. The true Penitent must resolve for the future to abstain from all Sin, *to be holy in all manner of Conversation, and to abound in all the fruits of righteousness, which by Jesus Christ are to the praise and glory of God.* For if a Man do truly repent of his wicked Life, there is the very same Reason why he should resolve against all Sin, as why he should resolve



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olve against any ; why he should observe all the Commandments of God, as why he should keep any one of them. For as St. *James* reasons concerning him that willfully breaks any one Commandment of God, that *he is guilty of all, and breaks the whole Law* ; because the Authority of God is equally stamp't upon all his Laws, and is violated and contemned by the wilful transgression of any one of them ; *For he that hath said, thou shalt not kill, hath likewise said, thou shalt not commit adultery, and thou shalt not steal* : so he that resolves against any one Sin, or upon Performance of any one part of his Duty, ought for the very same reason to make his Resolution universal ; because one Sin is Evil and Provoking to God, as well as another ; and the Performance of one part of our Duty good and pleasing to him, as well as another, and there is no difference. So that he that resolves against any Sin, upon wise and reasonable grounds, because of the Evil of it, and the danger of the wrath of God to which it exposeth us, ought for the same reason to resolve against all Sin ; be-  
cause

cause it is damnable *to commit adultery*, and *to steal*, as well as *to kill*; and that Resolution against Sin, which is not universal, it is a plain Case that it is not true and sincere, and that it was not taken up out of the sense of the intrinsecal evil of Sin, and the danger of it in respect of God and the Judgment of another World; (for this Reason holds against every Sin, and remains always the same) but that it was taken up upon some inferior Consideration, either because of the Shame and Infamy of it among men, or because of some other temporal inconvenience, which if the Man could be secur'd against, he would presently break his Resolution, and return to the Commission of that Sin, with as much freedom as any other.

2. A sincere Resolution implies a Resolution of the Means as well as of the End. He that is truly and honestly resolved against any Sin, is likewise resolved to avoid as much as is possible the Occasions and Temptations which may lead or draw him to that Sin; or if they happen to present

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present themselves to him, he is resolved to stand upon his Guard and to resist them. In like manner he that sincerely resolves upon doing his Duty in any kind, must resolve upon the Means that are requisite and necessary to the due Discharge and Performance of that Duty. As he that resolves against that needless and useless Sin of Swearing in common Conversation, must resolve also *to set a guard before the door of his lips*, seeing it is certain that it requires great care and attention, at least for some competent time, to get rid of a habit.

When *David* resolved *not to offend with his Tongue*, he resolved at the same time to be very watchful over himself, *Psal. 39. 1. I said I will take heed to my ways, that I offend not with my Tongue: I will keep my mouth as with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.* For a Man to resolve against any Sin or Vice, and yet to involve himself continually in the occasions, and to run himself into the Company and Temptations which do naturally, and will almost necessarily lead and betray him into those Sins, is a plain



plain evidence of insincerity. This I take for a certain rule, that whatever can reasonably move a Man to resolve upon any End, will, if his Resolution be sincere and honest, determine him every whit as strongly to use all those Means which are necessary in order to that end. But of this I have spoken elsewhere.

Serm. 7.

3. A sincere Resolution of leaving our Sins, and returning to God and our Duty, does imply the present time, and that we are to resolve speedily and without delay to put this Resolution in practice; that we are preremptorily determined not to go one step farther in the ways of Sin, not to neglect any Duty that God requires of us, not for one moment; but immediately and forthwith to set upon the practice of it, so soon as occasion and opportunity is offer'd to us. And the Reason of this is evident; Because the very same Considerations that prevail upon any Man to take up this Resolution of amendment, and changing the Course of his Life, are every whit as prevalent to engage him to put

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this Resolution presently in practice and execution.

I deny not, but a Man may resolve upon a thing for the future, and when the time comes, may execute his Resolution, and this Resolution may for all that be very sincere and real, tho' it was delayed to a certain time, because he did not see Reason to resolve to do the thing sooner: But it cannot be so in this Case of Repentance; because there can no good Reason be imagined, why a Man should resolve seven years hence to change his Course, and break off his sinful Life, but the very same Reason will hold as strongly, why he should do it presently and without delay; and over and besides this, there are a great many and powerful Reasons and Considerations, why he should rather put this good Resolution in present Execution, than put it off and defer it to any farther time whatsoever.

What is it that puts thee upon this Resolution of leaving thy Sins, and urgeth thee to do it at all? Art thou resolved to leave Sin, because it is

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so great an Evil? Why it is so for the present; the Evil of it is intrinsic to it, and cleaves to the very Nature of it, and is never to be separated from it: so that this is a present Reason, and as strong against it now, as ever it will be hereafter: nay it is stronger at present; because if it be so great an Evil, the sooner we leave it, the better.

Or dost thou resolve to forsake Sin, because thou art apprehensive of the danger and mischief of it, that it will expose thee to the wrath of God, and to the endless and intolerable Misery of another World? Why this Reason likewise makes much more for the present leaving of it; because the longer thou continuest in a sinful and impenitent state, the greater is thy danger, and the greater Penalty thou wilt most certainly incur; by delaying to put this good Resolution in practice, thou dost increase and multiply the Causes of thy Fear. For hereby thou provokest God more, and every day dost incense his wrath more and more against thee; thou preparest more and more fuel for



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*everlasting burnings, and treasurest up for thy self more wrath, against the day of wrath, and the Revelation of the righteous Judgment of God. Nay thou dost not only increase and aggravate, but thou dost hereby hasten thine own Misery and Ruine, and takest the most effectual Course that is possible, to bring thine own Fears, and the Vengeance of Almighty God, so much the sooner upon thee. For nothing provokes God to take a speedier course with sinners, and does more quicken the pace of his Judgments, than willful continuance in Sin.*

And yet farther; If thy Resolution be valuable and considerable to thee, thou takest the most effectual course in the World to frustrate and defeat it. Thou art fully resolved to leave thy Sins hereafter, and thou thinkest thou hast Reason for it: but by continuing in them for the present, thou provokest the Justice of Almighty God to cut thee off, before thy Resolution hath taken effect.

Again; Dost thou resolve to leave thy Sins one time or other, because thereby

thereby thou hopest to put thy self into a Capacity of Pardon and Mercy, and of Eternal Life and Happiness? Why this Reason should move thee to do the thing as soon as is possible; because the sooner thou forsakest thy Sins, thou hast the greater hope of finding Mercy and Forgiveness with God; and the sooner thou beginnest a Holy Course, and the longer thou continuest therein, thou hast Reason to expect a greater and more ample Reward. Thou canst not by holding off, hope to bring down Pardon and Mercy to lower Rates, and to obtain these hereafter upon easier Terms: No; the Terms and Conditions of God's Mercy are already fixt and establish'd, so as never to be alter'd.

So that whatever Reason thou canst possibly alledge for taking up this Resolution, it is every whit as forcible and powerful to perswade thee to put it speedily in Execution.

And then there is this Reason besides, and that a very considerable one, why thou shouldest immediately

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ly put this Resolution in practice, and not delay it for a moment. Thou may'st at present do it much more certainly, and much more easily. Much more certainly; because thou art surer of the present time, than thou canst be of the future. The present is in thy power, but not one moment more. And thou may'st at present do it more easily; for the longer thou continuest in Sin, thy Resolution against it will still grow weaker, and the habit of Sin continually stronger. Thou wilt every day be more enslaved by the Power of thy Lusts, and thy heart will every day be more *hardened through the deceitfulness of sin*. All the change that time makes, will still be for the worse, and more to thy disadvantage. Sin will be as pleasant to thee hereafter, and thou more loth to leave it, than at present. Sin was never mortified by Age. It will every day have more strength to bind thee and hold thee fast, and thou wilt every day have less to break loose from it. For by every Sin thou dost commit, thou addest a new degree to the strength and force of it; and so much strength as thou addest

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to it, so much thou takest from thy self, and so much thou lovest of thine own Power and Liberty. For a Man and his Lusts are like Nature and a Disease: so much strength as the Disease gains, Nature loseth, and the Man is hereby doubly weakned: for he does not only lose so much of his own strength, but the Enemy gets it.

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Serm. 9.

Nay thou dost hereby likewise forfeit that auxiliary strength and assistance which the Grace of God is ready to afford to men, his restraining and his preventing Grace. For as a Man goes on in Sin, and advanceth in an evil Course, the Grace of God draws off by degrees, and his Holy Spirit doth insensibly leave him: and when a sinner is come to this, his best Resolutions will *vanish like the morning cloud, and the early dew which passeth away.*

So that it cannot be a true and sincere Resolution of leaving our Sins, if it do not take place, and have not its effect presently. For there is no Man that takes up a Resolution, upon weighty and considerable Reasons,

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of doing any thing; but if the Reasons upon which he takes it up urge him to do the thing at present, he will presently set about it: and that Man is not resolved to do a thing, whatever he may pretend, who hath most Reason to do it at present, and may best do it now, and yet delays it.

And thus I have opened to you the Nature of this holy Resolution of leaving our Sins, and returning to God and our Duty; and have shewn what is necessarily implied in such a Resolution, if it be sincere and in good earnest; That it be Universal; and that it be a Resolution of the Means, as well as of the End; and that it presently take place and be put in Execution. And these are *three* the best Signs and Marks that I know of, whereby a Man may try and examine the truth and sincerity of that Resolution of Amendment, which we call Repentance. If it be against all Sin, and have an equal regard to every part of our Duty; if when we resolve upon the End, that is to avoid Sin, and to perform our Duty, we are equally resolved upon

upon the Means that are necessary to those Ends; if the Resolution we have taken up commence presently, and from that day forward be duly executed and put in practice, then is our Repentance and Resolution of Amendment sincere: but if there be a defect in any of these, our Resolution is not as it ought to be.

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# SERMON X.

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The Nature and Necessity of  
 holy Resolution.

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The Second Sermon on this Text.

J O B XXXIV. 31, 32.

*Surely it is meet to be said unto God,  
 I have born chastisement, I will not  
 offend any more. That which I see  
 not, teach thou me; if I have done  
 iniquity, I will do no more.*

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**T**HESSE words are the Descripti-  
 on of the temper and behavi-  
 our of a true Penitent, and do con-  
 tain in them the *two* essential parts  
 of a true Repentance.

*First,*

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*First*, An humble Acknowledgment and Confession of Sin.

*Secondly*, A firm Purpose and Resolution of amendment and forsaking our Sins, for the future.

And this latter is so necessary a part of Repentance, that herein the very Essence and formal Nature of Repentance does consist. In handling of this Argument, I proposed to consider,

I. What Resolution in general is.

II. What is the special Object or Matter of this kind of Resolution.

III. What is implied in a sincere Resolution of leaving our Sins, and returning to God and our Duty.

IV. To shew that in this Resolution of amendment, the very Essence and formal Nature of Repentance doth consist.

V. To



V. To offer some Considerations to convince men of the necessity and fitness of this Resolution, and of keeping stedfast to it.

VI. To add some Directions concerning the managing and maintaining this holy Resolution. The *three* first I have spoken to, I now proceed to the

IV. To shew that in this Resolution the very Essence and formal Nature of Repentance doth consist. A Man may do many reasonable Actions, without an explicit Resolution. In things that are more easie and natural to us, Judgment and Resolution are all one; it is all one to judge a thing fit to be done, and to resolve to do it. But in matters of difficulty, when a Man is to strive against the Stream, and to oppose strong Habits that have taken deep root, there is nothing to be done without an explicit Resolution. No Man makes any remarkable change in his Life, so as to cross his Inclinations and Custom, without an expresse Resolution. Fortho' a  
Man's

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Man's Judgment be never so much convinced of the reasonableness and necessity of such a change; yet unless a Man's Spirit be fortified and fixt by Resolution, the power of Custom, and the violence of his own Inclinations will carry him against his Judgment. Now there is no change of a Man's Life can be imagined, wherein a Man offers greater violence to inveterate Habits, and to the strong Propensions of his present temper, than in this of Repentance. So that among all the Actions of a Man's Life, there is none that doth more necessarily require an exprefs Purpose, than Repentance does.

And that herein Repentance doth chiefly consist, I shall endeavour to make evident from Scripture, and from the common apprehensions of Mankind concerning Repentance.

The Scripture, besides the several descriptions of Repentance, useth two words to exprefs it to us, μεταμέλεια and μετάνοια. The former properly signifies the inward trouble and displeasure which men conceive against themselves, for having done amiss; which

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if it be *καὶ θεὸν λύπη*, a godly sorrow, it worketh in us *μετάνοιαν ἀμεταμέλητον*, as St. Paul calls it, a Repentance not to be repented of, that is, such a change of our Minds, which as we shall have no Cause to be troubled at, so no Reason to alter afterwards. And what is this, but a firm, stedfast, and unalterable Resolution?

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The Scripture likewise useth several Phrases of the like importance, to describe Repentance by; as *forsaking and turning from sin*, and *conversion and turning to God*. *Forsaking and turning from sin*. Hence it is call'd Repentance from dead works, Heb. 6. 1. and turning to God, Acts 26. 20. *I have shewed to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God*, that is, from the worship of Idols, to the true God. And we have both these together in the description which the Prophet gives of Repentance, Isa. 55. 7. *Let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous Man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord*. Now this change begins in the sinners Resolution of doing this; and the unrighteous Man's forsaking his thoughts,



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thoughts, is nothing else but changing the purpose of his Mind, and resolving upon a better Course. And thus *Lactantius* describes it: *Agere autem pœnitentiam nihil aliud est, quam affirmare & profiteri se non amplius peccaturum.* To repent is nothing else, but for a Man to declare and profess that he will sin no more. This is Repentance before men. And Repentance before God, is a Resolution answerable to this Profession. And elsewhere saith the same Author, *The Greeks do most fully express Repentance by the word μετανοια, because he that repents recovers his mind from his former folly, and is troubled at it; & confirmat animam suam ad rectius vivendum, and confirms his mind for a better Course.* And how is this done but by Resolution?

And that this is the natural and true notion of Repentance appears, in that the Heathens did consent and agree in it. *Gellius* gives this description of it. *Pœnitere tum dicere solemus, cum quæ ipsi fecimus, ea nobis post incipiunt displicere, sententiamque in iis nostram demutamus.* We are said then to repent, when those things which we have

have done begin afterwards to displease us, and we change our Resolution about them. And so likewise one of the Philosophers describes it; Repentance is the beginning of Philosophy, a flying from foolish words and actions, καὶ τῆς ἀμεταμελήτης ζωῆς ἡ πρώτη ᾠδασκευή, and the first preparation of a life not to be repented of.

It is true indeed, Repentance supposeth the entire change of our Lives and Actions, and a continued state, as the proper consequence of it: but Repentance is but the beginning of this change, which takes its rise from the Purpose and Resolution of our Minds; and if it be sincere and firm, it will certainly have this effect, to change our Lives; and if it be not so, it is not Repentance. For tho' in the Nature of the thing it be possible, that a Man may sincerely resolve upon a thing, and yet let fall his Resolution afterwards, before it come into Act: yet in the Phrase of Scripture, nothing is call'd Repentance, but such a Resolution as takes effect, so soon as there is opportunity for it. If we change our Resolution, and repent of our Repen-

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tance, this is not that which St. Paul calls *Repentance unto Salvation*. So that no Man that reads and considers the Bible, can impose upon himself so grossly, as to conceit himself a true Penitent, and consequently to be in a state of Salvation, who hath been troubled for his Sins, and hath taken up a Resolution to leave them, if he do not pursue this Resolution, and act according to it.

V. I shall in the next place propound some Arguments and Considerations to perswade men to this holy Resolution, and then to keep them firm and stedfast to it, so as never to change it after they have once taken it up.

*First*, I shall propound some Arguments to perswade men to take up this Resolution; and they are these.

1. Consider that this Resolution of Repentance, is nothing but what, under the influence of God's Grace and holy Spirit, which are never wanting to the sincere endeavours of men, is in your Power. And it is necessary



to premise this; for unless this be clear'd, all the other Arguments that I can use will signifie nothing. For nothing in the World could be more vain, than to take a great deal of pains to perswade men to do a thing which they cannot do, to entreat them to attempt an Impossibility, and to urge and solícite them with all earnestness and importunity to do that which is absolutely and altogether out of their Power. All the Commands of God, and the Exhortations of his Word, and all the Promises and Threatnings, whereby these Commands and Exhortations are enforced, do plainly suppose, either that it is in our Power to do the thing which God commands or exhorts us to: or else, if it be not (which I grant it is not) that God is ready by his Grace and Strength, if we be not wanting to our selves, to assist and enable us to those Ends and Purposes. For the Gospel supposeth a Power going along with it, and that the holy Spirit of God works upon the Minds of Men, to quicken and excite and assist them to their Duty. And if it were not so, the Exhortations of

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Preachers would be nothing else, but a cruel and bitter mocking of sinners, and an Ironical insulting over the misery and weakness of poor Creatures; and for Ministers to preach, or People to hear Sermons, upon other Terms, would be the vaineſt expence of time, and the idleſt thing we do all the week; and all our Diſſwaſives from Sin, and Exhortations to Holineſs and a good Life, and vehement Perſwaſions of men to ſtrive to get to Heaven and to eſcape Hell, would be juſt as if one ſhould urge a blind Man, by many Reaſons and Arguments taken from the Advantages of Sight, and the Comfort of that Senſe, and the Beauty of external Objects, by all means to open his Eyes, and to behold the delights of Nature, to ſee his way, and to look to his ſteps; and ſhould upbraid him, and be very angry with him for not doing ſo. Why, if Reſolution be abſolutely impoſſible to us, and a thing wholly out of our Power, it is juſt the ſame Caſe. But then we ought to deal plainly and openly with men, and to tell them, that what we ſo earneſtly perſwade them to, is that which we certainly

certainly know they cannot do. So that it is necessary, if I intend that the following Considerations should do any good, to assure men, that it is not impossible for them to make a Resolution of leaving their Sins, and returning to God. Ser. 10.

It is a Power which every Man is naturally invested withal, *to Consider, and Judge, and Chuse.* To *Consider*, that is, to weigh and compare things together. To *Judge*, that is, to determine which is best. And to *Chuse*, that is, to resolve to do it or not. And there is nothing more evident and more universally acknowledged in temporal Cases, and in the Affairs and Concernments of this Life. In these matters Resolution is a thing ordinary and of frequent practice; it is the Principle of all great and considerable Actions. Men resolve to be great in this World, and by virtue of this Resolution, when they have once taken it up, what industry will they not use! what hazards will they not run in the pursuit of their Ambitious Designs! Difficulties and Dangers do rather whet their

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Courage, and set an edge upon their Spirits. Men resolve to be rich; the Apostle speaks of some *that will be rich*, 1 Tim. 6. *They that will be rich*; and tho' this be but a low and mean Design, yet these Persons, by virtue of this Resolution, will toil and take prodigious pains in it.:

And as to Spiritual things, every Man hath the same Power radically, that is, he hath the Faculties of Understanding and Will; but these are obstructed and hinder'd in their exercise, and strongly byass'd a contrary way by the Power of Evil Inclinations and Habits; so that as to the exercise of this Power and the effect of it in Spiritual things, men are in a sort as much disabled, as if they were destitute of it. For 'tis in effect all one, to have no Understanding at all to consider things that are Spiritual, as to have the Understanding blinded by an invincible Prejudice; to have no Liberty as to Spiritual things, as to have the Will strongly byass'd against them. For a Man that hath this prejudice upon his Understanding, and this byass upon his Will, it is to all  
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intents and purposes as if he were destitute of these Faculties. But then we are not to understand this Impotency to be absolutely natural, but accidental; not to be in the first Frame and Constitution of our Souls, but to have hapned upon the depravation of Nature. It is not a want of natural Faculties, but the binding of them up and hindring their Operations to certain purposes. This Impotency proceeds from the Power of evil Habits. And thus the Scripture expresth it, and compares an Impotency arising from bad Habits and Customs to a natural Impossibility; nothing coming nearer to Nature, than a powerful Custom. *Can the Ethiopian change his Skin, or the Leopard his Spots? Then may ye also, that are accustomed to do evil, learn to do well.*

But now God by the Gospel hath designed the Recovery of Mankind from the slavery of Sin, and the Power of their Lusts; and therefore, as by the death of Christ he hath provided a way to remove the guilt of Sin, so by the Spirit of Christ he furnisheth

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eth us with sufficient Power to destroy the Dominion of Sin. I say *sufficient*, if we be not wanting to our selves, but be *workers together with God*, and be as diligent to work out our own salvation, as he is ready to work in us both to will and to do.

So that when we perswade men to repent and change their Lives, and to resolve upon a better Course, we do not exhort them to any thing that is absolutely out of their Power; but to what they may do, tho' not of themselves, yet by the Grace of God, which is always ready to assist them, unless by their former gross neglects and long obstinacy in an evil Course, they have provoked God to withdraw his Grace from them. So that tho, considering our own strength abstractedly, and separately from the Grace of God, these things be not in our Power; yet the Grace of God puts them into our Power.

And this is so far from derogating from the Grace of God, that it is highly to the Praise of it. For if the Grace of God makes us able to repent and resolve



resolve upon a new Life, he that asserts this does not attribute his Repentance to himself, but to the Grace of God: nay he that says that God's Grace excites, and is ready to assist men to do what God commands, represents God immensely more good and gracious, than he that says that God commands men to do that which by their natural Power they cannot do, and will condemn them for not doing it, and yet denies them that Grace which is necessary to the doing of it.

Let this then be establish'd as a necessary Consideration to prevent discouragement, that to resolve upon the change of our Lives, is that which by the Grace of God we are enabled to do, if we will. Resolution is no strange and extraordinary thing; it is one of the most common Acts that belongs to us as we are men; but we do not ordinarily apply it to the best purposes. It is not so ordinary for men to resolve to be good, as to be rich and great; not so common for men to resolve against Sin, as to resolve against Poverty and Suffering. It is not so usual for men to resolve to keep

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keep a good Conscience, as to keep a good Place. Indeed our corrupt Nature is much more opposite to this holy kind of Resolution. But then to balance and answer this, God hath promised greater and more immediate assistance to us in this case, than in any other. There is a general blessing and common assistance promised to Resolution and Diligence about temporal things; and God's Providence doth often advance such Persons to riches and honour. *The diligent hand, with God's blessing, makes rich*, as Solomon tells us, *Prov. 10. 4. and 22. 19. Seest thou (says he) a Man diligent in business? He shall stand before Princes, he shall not stand before mean Persons.* Now diligence is the effect of a great and vigorous Resolution. But there is a special and extraordinary blessing and assistance, that attends the Resolution and Endeavour of a holy Life. God hath not promised to strengthen men *with all might* in the way to Riches and Honours, and to assist the ambitious and covetous designers of this World, with a *mighty and glorious Power, such as raised up Jesus from the Dead*: but this he hath promised to

to those, who with a firm Purpose and Resolution do engage in the ways of Religion. Let us then shake off our sloth and listlessness, and in that strength and assistance which God offers, let us resolve to leave our Sins, and to amend our Lives.

2. Consider what it is that you are to resolve upon; to leave your Sins, and to return to God and Goodness. So that the things I am perswading you to resolve upon, are the strongest Reasons that can be for such a Resolution. Sin is such a thing, that there can be no better Argument to make men resolve against it, than to consider what it is, and to think seriously of the Nature and Consequence of it. And God and Goodness are so amiable and desirable, that the very proposal of these Objects hath invitations and allurements enough to inflame our desires after them, and to make us rush into the embraces of them. If we would but enter into the serious Consideration of them, we should soon be resolved in our Minds about them.



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Do but consider a little what Sin is. It is the shame and blemish of thy Nature, the reproach and disgrace of thy Understanding and Reason, the great deformity and disease of thy Soul, and the eternal Enemy of thy Rest and Peace. It is thy Shackles and thy Fetters, the Tyrant that oppresses thee and restrains thee of thy Liberty, and condemns thee to the basest Slavery and the vilest Drudgery. It is the unnatural and violent state of thy Soul, the *Worm* that perpetually gnaws thy Conscience, the cause of all thy Fears and Troubles, and of all the Evils and Miseries, all the Mischiefs and Disorders that are in the World ; it is the Foundation and Fewel of Hell ; it is that which puts thee out of the Possession and Enjoyment of thy self, which doth alienate and separate thee from God the Fountain of Bliss and Happiness, which provokes him to be thine Enemy, and lays thee open every moment to the fierce revenge of his Justice, and if thou dost persist and continue in it, will finally sink and oppress thee under the insupportable weight of his wrath, and make

make thee so weary of thy self, that thou shalt wish a thousand times that thou hadst never been; and will render thee so perfectly miserable, that thou wouldest esteem it a great Happiness to exchange thy Condition with the most wretched and forlorn Person that ever lived upon Earth, to be perpetually upon a Rack, and to lie down for ever under the rage of all the most violent Diseases and Pains that ever afflicted Mankind. Sin is all this which I have described, and will certainly bring upon thee all those Evils and Mischiefs which I have mentioned, and make thee far more miserable than I am able to express, or thou to conceive. And art thou not yet resolved to leave it? Shall I need to use any other Arguments to set thee against it, and to take thee off from the Love and Practice of it, than this Representation which I have now made of the horrible Nature and Consequences of it?

And then consider on the other hand, what it is that I am perswading thee to turn to; to thy God and Duty. And would not this be a  
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~ blessed change indeed ! To leave the greatest Evil, and to turn to the chief Good ! For this Resolution of returning to God, is nothing else but a Resolution to be wise and happy, and to put thy self into the Possession of that which is a greater Good, if it is possible, than Sin is an Evil, and will render thee more happy, than Sin can make thee miserable. Didst thou but think what God is, and what he will be to thee if thou wilt return to him, how kindly he will receive thee after all thy wandrings from him *days without number*, thou wouldst soon take up the Resolution of the Prodigal, and say, *I will arise and go to my Father.*

And consider likewise what it is to return to thy Duty. It is nothing else but to do what becomes thee, and what is suitable to the Original Frame of thy Nature, and to the truest dictates of thy Reason and Conscience, and what is not more thy Duty, than it is thy Interest and thy Happiness. For that which God requires of us, is to be righteous and holy and good, that is, to be like God himself, who

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is the Pattern of all Perfection and Happiness. It is to have our Lives conformed to his Will, which is always perfect holiness and goodness, a state of Peace and Traquillity, and the very temper and disposition of Happiness. It is that which is a principal and most essential Ingredient into the Felicity of the Divine Nature, and without which God would not be what he is, but a deformed and imperfect and miserable Being.

And if this be a true Representation which I have made to you, of Sin and Vice on the one hand, and of God and Goodness on the other, what can be more powerful than the serious Consideration of it, to engage us to a speedy Resolution of leaving our Sins, and of *turning and cleaving to the Lord with full purpose of heart?* After this we cannot but conclude with the Penitent in the Text; *Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I will not offend any more: That which I see not, teach thou me; and if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.*

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3. Consider how unreasonable it is to be unresolved in a Case of so great moment and concernment. There is no greater Argument of a Man's weakness, than Irresolution in matters of mighty consequence, when both the Importance of the thing, and Exigency of present circumstances require a speedy Resolution. We should account it a strange folly, for a Man to be unresolved in the clearest and plainest matters that concern his temporal welfare and safety. If a Man could not determine himself whether he should eat or starve; if he were dangerously sick, and could not determine whether he should take Physick or Die; or if one that were in Prison, could not resolve himself whether he should accept of Liberty, and be contented to be released; or if a fair Estate were offer'd to him, he should desire seven years time to consider whether he should take it or not: this would be so absurd in the common affairs of Life, that a Man would be thought infatuated, that should be doubtful and unresolved in cases so plain, and of such pressing concernment.

ment. If a Man were under the Sentence and Condemnation of the Law, and liable to be executed upon the least intimation of the Prince's Pleasure, and a Pardon were graciously offer'd to him, with this intimation, that this would probably be the last offer of Mercy that ever would be made to him; one would think that in this Case a Man should soon be determined what to do, or rather that he should not need to deliberate at all about it; because there is no danger of rashness in making haste to save his Life.

And yet the Case of a sinner is of far greater importance, and much more depends upon it, infinitely more than any temporal Concernment whatsoever can amount to, even our Happiness or Misery to all Eternity. And can there be any difficulty, for a Man to be resolved what is to be done in such a Case? No Case surely in the World can be plainer than this; Whether a Man should leave his Sins, and return to God and his Duty, or not, that is, whether a Man should chuse to be happy or miserable, unspeakably



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ably and everlastingly happy, or extremely and eternally miserable.

And the circumstances and exigencies of our Case do call for a speedy and peremptory Resolution in this matter. The Sentence of the Law is already past, and God may execute it upon thee every moment, and it is great Mercy and Forbearance not to do it. Thy Life is uncertain, and thou art liable every minute to be snatch'd away and hurried out of this World. However at the best, thou hast but a little time to resolve in ; Death and Judgment and Eternity cannot be far off, and for ought thou knowest they may be even at the door. Thou art upon the matter just ready to be seized upon by Death, to be summon'd to Judgment, and to be swallowed up of Eternity: And is it not yet time, thinkest thou, to resolve? Wouldst thou have yet a little longer time to deliberate, whether thou shouldst repent and forsake thy Sins, or not? If there were difficulty in the Case, or if there were no danger in the delay ; if thou couldst gain time, or any thing else, by suspending thy Resolution ; there

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were then some Reason why thou shouldst not make a sudden Determination. But thou canst pretend none of these. It is evident at first sight, what is best to be done, and nothing can make it plainer. It is not a matter so clear and out of Controversie, that Riches are better than Poverty, and Ease better than Pain, and Life more desirable than Death; as it is, that it is better to break off our Sins, than to continue in the Practice of them; to be reconciled to God, than to go on to provoke him; to be Holy and Virtuous, than to be Wicked and Vicious; to be *Heirs of eternal Glory*, than to be *Vessels of wrath fitted for Destruction*.

And there is infinite danger in these delays. For if thy Soul be any thing to thee, thou venturést that; if thou hast any tenderness and regard for thy eternal Interest, thou runnest the hazard of that; if Heaven and Hell be any thing to thee, thou incurrest the danger of losing the one, and falling into the other.

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And thou gaineſt nothing by continuing unreſolved. If Death and Judgment would tarry thy leiſure, and wait till thou haſt brought thy thoughts to ſome iſſue, and were reſolved what to do, it were ſomething: but thy Irreſolution in this matter will be ſo far from keeping back Death and Judgment, that it will both haſten and aggravate them, both make them to come the ſooner, and to be the heavieſt when they come: becauſe thou abuſeſt the goodneſs of God, and *deſpiſeſt his patience and long-ſuffering, which ſhould lead thee and draw thee on to Repentance,* and not keep thee back. Hereby thou encourageſt thy ſelf in thy lewd and riotous courſes, and, becauſe *thy Lord delayeth his coming,* art the more negligent and extravagant. Hear what doom our Lord pronounceth upon ſuch *slothful and wicked ſervants,* Luke 12. 46. *The Lord of that ſervant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware; and will cut him in ſunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.* None ſo like to be ſurprized, and



and to be severely handled by the Justice of God, as those that trifle with his Patience. Ser. 10.

4. Consider how much Resolution would tend to the settling of our Minds, and making our Lives comfortable. There is nothing that perplexeth and disquieteth a man more, than to be unresolved in the great and important Concernments of his Life. What anxiety and confusion is there in our Spirits, whilst we are doubtful and undetermined about such matters? How are we divided and distracted, when our Reason and Judgment direct us one way; and our Lusts and Affections bias us to the contrary? When we are convinced and satisfied what is best for us; and yet are disaffected to our own Interest. Such a Man is all the while self-condemned, and acts with the perpetual regret of his Reason and Conscience; and when ever he reflects upon himself, he is offended and angry with himself, his Life and all his Actions are uneasy and displeasing to him; and there is no way for this Man to be

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at peace, but to put an end to this conflict one way or other, either by conquering his Reason or his Will. The former is very difficult, nothing being harder than for a sinner to lay his Conscience asleep, after it is once thoroughly awaken'd; he may charm it for a while, but every little occasion will rouse it again, and renew his Trouble; so that tho' a Man may have some Truce with his Conscience, yet he can never come to a firm and settled Peace this way: but if by a vigorous Resolution a Man would but conquer his Will, his Mind would be at rest, and there would be a present calm in his Spirit. And why should we be such enemies to our own Peace, and to the Comfort and Contentment of our Lives, as not to take this course, and thereby rid our selves at once of that, which really and at the bottom is the ground of all the trouble and disquiet of our Lives?

SER-

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# SERMON XI.

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The Nature and Necessity of  
holy Resolution.

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The Third Sermon on this Text.

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J O B XXXIV. 31, 32.

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*Surely it is meet to be said unto God,  
I have born chastisement, I will not  
offend any more. That which I see  
not, teach thou me; if I have done  
iniquity, I will do no more.*

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**T**HESE words are a Descripti-  
on of the temper and behavi-  
our of a true Penitent, his Confession  
of Sins, and Resolution of Amend-  
ment. Concerning Resolution I have  
shewn what it is in general: What



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is the special Object or Matter of this kind of Resolution: What is implied in a sincere Resolution of leaving our Sins, and returning to God and our Duty: That in this Resolution the very Essence and formal Nature of Repentance doth consist: And have offer'd some Considerations, to convince men of the necessity and fitness of this Resolution, and to keep them stedfast to it. As,

1. That this Resolution is nothing but what under the influence of God's Grace is in our Power.

2. The things themselves, which we are to resolve upon, are the strongest Arguments that can be for such a Resolution.

3. How unreasonable it is for men to be unresolved in a Case of so great moment.

4. How much this Resolution will tend to the settling of our Minds, and making our Lives comfortable. I proceed to the Considerations which remain.

5. Then

5. Then be pleased to consider, that a strong and vigorous Resolution would make the whole Work of Religion easie to us, it would conquer all difficulties which attend a Holy and Religious Course of Life, especially at our first entrance into it: Because Resolution brings our Minds to a Point, and unites all the strength and force of our Souls in one great Design, and makes us vigorous and firm, couragious and constant in the Prosecution of it; and without this it is impossible to hold out long, and to resist the strong Propensions and Inclinations of our corrupt Nature, which if we be not firmly resolved, will return and by degrees gain upon us; it will be impossible to break through Temptations, and to gain-say the importunity of them; when the Devil and the World solicit us, we shall not be able to say them nay, but shall be apt to yield to them.

There are many, who have had faint wishes and cold desires, and half purposes of leading a new and better Life: but having not taken up a firm Reso-

Vol. 8. Resolution in the Case, having not determined themselves by a severe purpose, a little thing sways them, and brings them back to their former Course; 'tis no hard matter to divert them and engage them another way; they are *shaken with every wind of Temptation*, every little blast of Opposition and Persecution turns them back, and carries them to the ways of Sin: whereas Resolution fixeth a Man's Spirit, and makes it most steadfast and unmoveable, and sets him upon a *Rock*, which, when the winds blow, and the rain falls, and the floods come, abides firm against all impressions.

If I would give the most probable and useful advice to engage and continue a Man in a good Course, I would commend to him a deliberate and firm Resolution. *David* proved this way with very happy success, *Psal. 119. 106. I have sworn* (says he) *and will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous Judgments.* This was a security to him against all assaults, and nothing could turn him from his Course afterwards; not the dangers he

was



was exposed to, v. 109. *My soul is continually in my hand, yet do I not forget thy Law; not the snares of wicked men that were laid for him, v. 110. The wicked have laid a snare for me, yet I erred not from thy precepts.* By virtue of this Resolution he could rise up in defiance of all those that would have tempted him to any sinful action, v. 115. *Depart from me ye evil doers: for I will keep the Commandments of my God.*

Ser. II.

When a Man is thus resolved upon a holy Course, he is not easily diverted from it, and is able to resist the importunity and flattery of Temptations, and to say to them, as men are wont to do, when they are fully and firmly resolved upon any thing; *Let me alone, I am not to be moved, it is in vain to urge me, I am resolved to the contrary.* Thus stiff and resolute men can be in other Cases, where there is not near that Cause and Reason for it: and if we would but take up a generous Resolution to break off our Sins, and to live better Lives, this would be the way to conquer that listlessness and unwillingness, which hinders

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hinders us from engaging in a good Course, and is the cause of so many lame excuses and unreasonable delays. It is the want of Resolution, and the weakness of our Resolutions, which is the true Reason why we are not more equal and constant and uniform in the ways of Religion; but are religious only by fits and starts, in a heat, and during some present Trouble and Conviction of Mind. *The double minded Man is unstable,* says St. James, *in all his ways.* When a Man is of several Minds, he is easily moved one way or other.

6. And *lastly*, Consider the infinite danger of remaining unresolved. *The evil day may overtake you*, while you are deliberating whether you should avoid it or not. A state of Sin is liable to so many hazards, hath so many dangers continually threatening it, and hanging over it, that it is the most imprudent thing in the World to linger in it. It is like *Lot's* staying in *Sodom*, when the Lord was going to destroy it, when Fire and Brimstone were just ready to be rained down from Heaven upon it. Whilst

men

men are lingering in a sinful state, if *the Lord be not merciful to them*, they will be consumed. Therefore it concerns thee Sinner, to determine thy self speedily, and to make haste out of this dangerous Condition, *to escape for thy Life, lest some evil overtake thee*, and lest Death finding thee unresolved, determine thy case for thee, and put it out of all doubt, and past all remedy.

How many have been cut off in their Irresolution? And because they would not determine what to do, God hath concluded their case for them, and *sworn in his wrath, that they should not enter into his rest*. It may be thou promisest thy self the space of many years to resolve in: *Thou fool, this night thy soul may be required of thee*, and whilst thou art unresolved what to do, God is resolving what to do with thee, and putting a Period to his Patience and long expectation of thy Repentance: and thou knowest not how soon God may do this, and make an immutable Determination concerning thee. And wo  
unto



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unto thee, when God hath resolved thus.

Suppose thou shouldst be snatched out of the World, and hurried before the dreadful Tribunal of God, in this doubtful and unresolved state. And this is possible enough; because thou hast no certain tenure of thy Life, thou art at no time secured from the stroke of Death: Nay it is probable enough; because thou art every moment liable to ten thousand accidents, any one of which may snap in sunder the thread of thy Life. And suppose this should happen to thee, what dost thou imagine would become of thee? Wouldst not thou then wish a thousand times, that thou hadst resolved in time? How glad wouldst thou then be, that it were possible for thee to retrieve and call back but *one* of those *days without number*, which thou hast so vainly trifled away, that thou mightest resolve upon *the things of thy peace!* but *thou wouldest not* do it *in that thy day*, which God afforded thee to this purpose; thou hast let the opportunity slip out of thy hands, and it will never

ver be in thy Power again, but *the things of thy peace will be for ever hid from thine eyes.*

Ser. II.

Why wilt thou then be so foolish, as to run thy self upon the evident hazard of losing Heaven, and being miserable for ever? Why wilt thou make work for a sadder and longer Repentance, than that which thou dost now so carefully decline? This was the case of *the foolish Virgins* in the Parable, *Matth. 25.* who made account to be ready to meet the *Bridegroom* at his coming, but took no care in time to get *Oyl into their Lamps.* They thought the *Bridegroom* would *tarry* yet a while longer, and therefore *they slumbered and slept* in great security: but at *mid-night*, when *the cry was made, Behold the Bridegroom cometh*; then they *arose*, and in a great hurry and confusion went about *trimming their Lamps*; they were resolved then, they would have begged or bought *Oyl*, and would have been at any pains and cost for it: but then it was too late; for *the door was suddenly shut* against them, and

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and no importunity could prevail to have it opened to them.

Canst thou be contented to have *the Door shut* against thee, and when thou shalt cry, *Lord open unto me*, to have him return this answer, *Depart from me, I know thee not*? If thou canst not, resolve to prevent this in time.

Didst thou but see, and know, and feel, what the miserable do in Hell, thou couldst not linger thus, thou couldst not continue so long unresolved. Why the time will come, when thou wilt reflect severely upon thy self, and say, That I should ever be so stupid and sottish, to be unresolved in a matter of such infinite concernment to me! How often was I admonish'd and convinced of the necessity of changing my course? How many inward Motions had I to that purpose? How often did my own Reason and Conscience, and the holy Spirit of God, by his frequent and friendly suggestions, put me upon this? How often was I just upon the brink of resolving? I resolved to resolve; but still I delayed it till Death seized



seized upon me unresolved: and now the opportunity is lost, and never to be recover'd again. I would not in time resolve to be wise and happy: and now by the Sentence of the just and unchangeable God, it is resolved that I must be miserable to all Eternity.

How should these Considerations quicken us, who have yet these opportunities in our Hands: which those who neglected and trifled them away, would now purchase at any rate! I say, how should these Considerations which I have proposed, move us to take up a present Resolution in the matter! Consider these things, Sinner, and lay them seriously to Heart, and say to thy self, Fool that I have been, to be unresolved so long; not to determine my self in a matter of such mighty consequence; to continue so long in suspense, whether I had best go to Heaven or Hell, and which was most advisable, to be happy or miserable for ever! Blessed be God that hath been pleased to exercise so much Patience and Long-suffering towards me, that hath spared me so long,  
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when he might have taken me away, and cut me off unresolved. My Soul lies at stake, and for ought I know all Eternity depends upon my present and speedy Resolution. And now by God's Grace I will not delay one moment more, I will hang no longer between Heaven and Hell. I shall now in the

*Second* place, offer some Considerations to perswade those that have taken up this good Resolution, to pursue it, and to promote it to Practice and Execution, and to keep firm and stedfast to it. And to this end, be pleased to consider these *three* things.

I. What an Argument it is of vanity and inconstancy, to change this Resolution, whilst the Reason of it stands good and is not changed. I suppose that thou wert once resolved to leave thy Sins, and to return to God and thy Duty. Why dost thou not pursue this Resolution? Why dost thou not persist in it? Surely there appeared to thee some Reason why thou didst take it up; and if the Reason remain, and appear still the same

to thee that it did, How comes it to pass that thou hast alter'd thy Mind, and changed thy Purpose? Either the Case is the same it was, when thou took'st up this Resolution; or it is not. If it be altered, then thou hast Reason to change thy Resolution: if it be not, thou hast the same Reason to continue in it, that thou hadst to take it up. Shew then, if thou canst, wherein it is changed. Wert thou mistaken before about the Nature of Sin, and the pernicious consequences of it; or about the Nature of God and Goodness? Hast thou any thing now to plead for Sin, which thou didst not know or consider before? Art thou now satisfied that Sin is not so evil and unreasonable a thing, as thou didst once apprehend, or that it does not threaten thee with so much danger as thou didst fear? Hath God alter'd his opinion of it, or is he become more favourable to it than he was? Hast thou received any news lately from Heaven by any good Hands, that God hath revers'd his threatnings against Sin, or that he had adjourn'd the Judgment of the World, *sine die*, without any set time? That he hath



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set the Devils at Liberty, and releast them from their Chains of darkness, and hath quenched and put out the fire of Hell? Or art thou satisfied that there is no such Being as God in the World, or that he is not so good as thou didst apprehend him to be, or that he will not reward those that diligently serve him? Hast thou found upon Tryal, that Holiness and Virtue are but empty Names, and that there is nothing in them? That there is not that Pleasure and Peace in keeping the Commandments of God, which thou wert told of? I am sure thou canst not with Reason pretend any thing of all this. Thy Reason and Conscience and Experience cannot speak one word on the behalf of Sin, or give any Testimony against God and his holy ways. And if the Case be the same it was, nothing but thine own vanity and fickleness, or some worse Reason, could move thee to alter thy purpose.

2. Let it be farther considered, That if we be not constant to our Resolution, all we have done is lost. If thou repentest of thy Repentance, it will not prove a *Repentance to Salvation*.

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As good to have staid in *Sodom*, as to look back after thou art come out of it. Thus God tells us by the Prophet, *Ezek 33. 12, 13. Therefore thou son of Man, say unto the children of thy People, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression; neither shall the righteous be able to live in the day that he sinneth. When I say to the righteous, He shall surely live: if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousness shall not be remembered: but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it. So that whatever we have done in the Work of Repentance, what Resolutions forever we have taken up; if afterwards we give over and let them fall, all that we have done is lost, and will come to nothing.*

3. Let us consider in the last place, that if we be not constant to our Resolution, we shall not only lose all that we have done, but we shall thereby render our Condition much worse. Remember *Lot's Wife*, who, after she was escaped out of *Sodom*, look'd back, and was made a particular and lasting

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lasting monument of God's wrath and displeasure ; which seems to be meant by that expression of her being *turned into a Pillar of Salt*, that is, a *lasting monument*. Prov. 14. 14. *The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways. Shall be filled with his his own ways* ; this expression doth signify a most heavy and dreadful curse upon those, who fall off from their good Purpose and Resolution, that they shall have Sorrow and Trouble enough upon it. For so likewise Prov. 1. 26, 27. where God threatens wilful and obstinate Sinners with the heaviest Judgments, that he would *laugh at their calamity, and mock when their fear comes, when their fear comes as desolation, and their destruction as a whirl-wind, and fear and anguish cometh upon them* ; he adds, as the sum of all other Judgments, that *they shall eat the fruit of their own ways, and be filled with their own devices*. Heb. 10. 38. *But if any Man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him* ; which words are a *πεινωσις*, and signify a great deal more than seems to be exprest, *My soul shall have no pleasure in him* ; that is, let such an one expect



pest the effects of God's fiercest wrath and displeasure. For so the *Hebrews* are wont to express things that are great and unspeakable; when they cannot sufficiently set them forth, by saying less, they say more. So *Psal.* 5. 4. where it is said, *Thou art not a God that hast pleasure in wickedness*, the *Psalmist* means, and would have us to understand it so, that God is so far from taking any Pleasure in the Sins of men, that he bears the most violent hatred and displeasure against them. So when the Apostle here says, *If any Man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him*, he means, that it is not to be exprest how God will deal with such Persons, and how severely his Justice will handle them. To the same purpose is that Declaration, *2 Pet. 2. 20, 21.* For if after they have escaped the Pollutions of the World, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them, not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy Com-

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*mandment delivered unto them.* The condition of all impenitent sinners is very sad; but of Apostates much worse: not only because the Sins which they commit afterwards are much greater, receiving a new aggravation, which the Sins of those who are simply impenitent are not capable of; but likewise, because such Persons are usually more wicked afterwards. For they that break loose from severe Purposes and Resolutions of a better Course, do by this very thing in a great measure fear and conquer their Consciences; and then no wonder if afterwards *they give up themselves to commit all iniquity with greediness.* When after long abstinence men return to Sin again, their Lusts are more fierce and violent; like a Man who, after long fasting, returns to his meat with a more raging appetite. This our Saviour sets forth to us in the Parable of the unclean Spirit's returning again and taking possession of the Man, after he had left him, *Matth. 12 43, 44, 45. When the unclean Spirit is gone out of a Man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my House*

*House from whence I came out: And when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnisht. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other Spirits more wicked than himself; and the end of that Man is worse than his beginning.*

The Moral of which is, that when a Man hath once left his Sins, if afterward he entertain thoughts of returning to them again, Sin will return upon him with redoubled force and strength, and his Heart will be but so much the more prepared and disposed for the entertaining of more and greater Vices; and his leaving his Sins for a time will be but like a running back, that he may leap with greater violence into Hell and Destruction.

Besides that such Persons do the greatest injury to God and the holy ways of Religion, that can be, by forsaking them after they have owned and approved them. For it will not be so much regarded, what wicked men, who have always been so, talk against God and Religion; because they do not talk from Experience, but *speake evil of the things which they know*



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*know not* : whereas those who forsake the ways of Religion after they have once engaged in them, do disparage Religion more effectually, and reproach it with greater Advantage; because they pretend to speak from the Experience they have had of it; they have tryed both the ways of Sin, and the ways of Religion, and after Experience of both, they return to Sin again: Which, what is it but to proclaim to the World, that the ways of Sin and Vice are rather to be chosen than the ways of Holiness and Virtue; that the Devil is a better Master than God, and that a sinful and wicked Life yields more Pleasure and greater Advantages, than are to be had in keeping the Commandments of God? And this must needs be a high Provocation, and a heavy Aggravation of our Ruin. Let these Considerations prevail with us, to pursue this holy Resolution, after we have taken it up, and to persist in it. There remains only the

VI. And *last* particular which I proposed to be spoken to, *viz.* To add some directions for the maintaining

ing and making good of this Resolution of Repentance and Amendment; and they shall be these *three*. Ser. II.

1. Let us do all in the strength of God, considering our necessary and essential dependance upon him, and that *without him* and the assistance of his Grace *we can do nothing*. We are not (as the Apostle tells us) *sufficient of our selves, as of our selves*, that is, without the assistance of God's holy Spirit, *to think any thing* that is good; much less to resolve upon it. *It is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure*, that is, of his own goodness, as the same Apostle speaks, *Phil. 2. 13*. It is God that upholds us in Being, and from whom we have all our Power as to natural Actions; but as to spiritual things, considering the great Corruption and Depravation of Humane Nature, we stand in need of a more especial and immediate assistance.

If we know any thing of our selves, we cannot but know what foolish and ignorant Creatures we are, how weak and impotent, how averse  
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and opposite to any thing that is good. And therefore it is wise counsel in all Cases, but chiefly in spiritual Matters, which Solomon gives, *Prov. 3. 5, 6. Trust in the Lord with all thine Heart, and lean not to thine own understanding. Acknowledge him in all thy ways: and he shall direct thy steps.* Let us then address our selves to God, in the words of the holy Prophet, *Jer. 10. 23. O Lord, I know that the way of Man is not in himself, and that it is not in Man that walketh, to direct his steps.* And let us beg of him, that he would consider our Case, commiserate our weakness, and pity our impotency, and that he would joyn his strength to us, and grant us the assistance of his Grace and holy Spirit, to put us upon sincere Resolutions of a new Life, and to keep us constant and stedfast to them; to open the Eyes of our Minds, and to turn us from darkness to light, and from the Power of Satan and our Lusts, unto God; that we may repent and turn to God, and do works meet for Repentance, that so we may receive forgiveness of Sins, and an Inheritance



*tance among them that are sanctified through faith that is in Christ.*

*Ser. 11.*

And for our Encouragement in this matter, God hath bid us to apply our selves to him; and he hath promised not to be wanting to us, in words as expresse and universal as can well be devised. *Jam. 1. 6.* If any Man lack wisdom, let him ask it of God, who giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth no Man: but let him ask in Faith, nothing wavering, that is, not doubting but that God is both able and willing to give what he asks. And *Luke 11. 9, 10, 11, 12, 13.* I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened. If a Son shall ask bread of any of you that is a Father, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children;

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*dren; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the holy Spirit to them that ask him?* To encourage our Faith, our Saviour useth such an Argument as may give us the greatest assurance. We are commonly confident, that our earthly Parents will not deny us those things, that are good and necessary for us, tho' they may be otherwise evil: *how much more then shall our heavenly Father, who is essentially and infinitely good, give his holy Spirit to us?* And if this be not enough, St. Matthew useth a larger expression, *How much more shall your heavenly Father give good things to them that ask him?* If there be any thing that is good, and we stand in need of it, and earnestly pray to God for it, we may be confident that he will give it us.

2. We ought to be very watchful over our selves, considering our weakness and wavering, and instability and fickleness, the treachery and deceitfulness of our own Hearts, and the malice of Satan. It will be a great while before the Habits of

of Sin be so weakned and subdued, as that we shall have no Propension to return to them again; so that our Hearts will be often endeavouring to return to their former posture, and *like a deceitful Bow*, which is not firmly strong, to *start back*. And besides the deceitfulness of Sin and our own Hearts, the Devil is very malicious, and his malice will make him vigilant to watch all Advantages against us; and his great design will be to shake our Resolution; for if that stand, he knows his Kingdom will fall, and therefore he raiseth all his Batteries against this Fort, and labours by all means to undermine it, and nothing will be matter of greater Triumph to him, than to gain a Person that was revolted from him, and resolved to leave his Service. If therefore thou expectest God's Grace and Assistance to keep thee stedfast to thy Resolution, do not neglect thy self, but *keep thy Heart with all diligence*, and watch carefully over thy self: for because God *worketh in us both to will and to do*, therefore he expects that we *should work*



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*work out our Salvation with fear and trembling, lest by our own carelessness and neglect we should miscarry.*

3. Let us frequently renew and reinforce our Resolutions, more especially when we think of coming to the Sacrament, and approaching the holy Table of the Lord. Nothing is more apt to beget in us good Resolutions, and to strengthen them, than to consider the dreadful Sufferings of the Son of God for our Sins, which are so lively set forth and represented to us in his holy Sacrament, which as it is on God's part a Seal and Confirmation of his Grace and Love to us, so on our part it ought to be a solemn Ratification of our Covenant with God, *to depart from iniquity, and to walk before him in holiness and righteousness all the days of our Lives.*

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SER.

# SERMON XII.

## The Nature and Necessity of Restitution.

The First Sermon on this Text.

LUKE XIX. 8, 9.

*And if I have taken any thing from any Man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is Salvation come to this House.*

ONE particular and eminent Fruit of true Repentance, is the making of Restitution and Satisfaction to those whom we have injured. As for God, we can make no Satisfaction and Compensation to him, for

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the injuries we have done him by our Sins; all that we can do in respect of God, is to confess our Sins to him, to make acknowledgment of our Miscarriages, to be heartily troubled for what we have done, and not to do the like for the future. But for Injuries done to men, we may in many Cases make Reparation and Satisfaction. And this, as it is one of the best signs and evidences of a true Repentance; so it is one of the most proper and genuine effects of it: for this is as much as in us lies, to undo what we have done, and to unfin our Sins.

But, because the practice of this Duty doth so interfere with the Interest of men, and consequently it will be very difficult to convince men of their Duty in this particular, and to perswade them to it; therefore I design to handle this particular Fruit and Effect of a true Repentance by it self, from these words, which contain in them,

I. The Fruit and Effect of *Zacharias* his Conversion and Repentance; If



*I have taken any thing from any Man, I restore him fourfold.* Ser. 12.

II. The Declaration which our Saviour makes hereupon, of the truth of his Repentance and Conversion, and the happy state he was thereby put into. *And Jesus said unto him, This day is Salvation come to this House, for as much as he also is the Son of Abraham*; as if he had said, By these Fruits and Effects it appears, that this is a Repentance to Salvation; and this Man whom you look upon as a sinner and a heathen, may by better right call *Abraham Father*, than any of you formal Pharisees and *Jews*, who glory so much in being *the children of Abraham*.

I. The Fruit and Effect of *Zacheus's* Conversion and Repentance; *If, &c.*

This *Zacheus*, as you find at the 2d verse, was Chief of the Publicans, which was an Office of great Odium and Infamy among the *Jews*, they being the Collectors of the Tribute which the *Roman* Emperor, under whose Power the *Jews* then were,

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did exact from them. And because these Publicans farmed this Tribute of the Emperour at a certain Rent, they made a gain out of it to themselves, by exacting and requiring more of the People than was due upon that account; so that their Calling was very infamous, upon *three* accounts.

1. Because they were the Instruments of oppressing their Country-men; for so they looked upon the Tax they paid to the *Romans*, as a great oppression.

2. Because they were forced by the Necessity of their Calling to have familiar Conversation with Heathens, whom they lookt upon as sinners. Hence the Phrase used by the Apostle, of *Sinners of the Gentiles*. And hence likewise probably it is, that *Publicans and Sinners*, *Publicans and Heathen*, are joyned several times together, because of the occasions of frequent Converse which the Publicans had with Heathens.

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3. But

3. But principally they were odious, because of the common injustice and oppression, which they used in the management of their Calling, by fraud and violence extorting more than was due, to enhance the profit of their Places. Hence it is, that this sort of Officers have been generally branded, and reckoned among the worst sort of men. So he in the Comedy, *πάντες τηλώναι, πάντες εἰσὶν ἀρπαγες*, all Publicans are Rapacious or Robbers. And this is most probably the Sin which *Zachews* here repents of, and in regard to which he promises Restitution, *ὃς εἰ τινὸς ἐσυκοφάνησα*, And if I have taken any thing from any Man by false accusation; so we render the words in our Translation: but the word *ἐσυκοφάνησα* signifies more generally, If I have been injurious to any one, if I have wronged any Man, as appears by the constant use of this word by the LXX, who by this word do translate the most general Hebrew words, which signify any kind of Injury or Oppression, either by fraud or violence or calumny. So that there is no Reason here



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to restrain it, *wronging men by false accusation*: for *Zacheus* his Sin being in all probability extorting more than was due, this might as easily be done many other ways, as *by false accusation*. And that this was the common Sin of the Publicans, appears by the Counsel which *John the Baptist* gives them, *Luke 3. 12, 13. Then came also the Publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you*; that is, do not by fraud or violence extort from any Man, any more than the Tribute which is laid upon him.

So that *Zacheus* here promiseth, that if he had been injurious to any Man in his Office, by extorting more than was due, he would restore to him fourfold. And if *Zacheus* calculated his Estate right, and intended to reserve any part of it to himself, which is but reasonable to suppose; it could be no very great part of his Estate which was injuriously got; and I am afraid a far smaller proportion than many are guilty of, who yet pass for very honest men in comparison

parifon of the Publicans. The Text  
 faith, he was *a rich Man*. Suppose he  
 was worth ten or twelve thousand  
 Pounds; half he gives to the Poor;  
 That was well got, or else his whole E-  
 fte could not have made fourfold Re-  
 ftitution for it. Suppose he referved a  
 thoufand or two to himfelf, then at  
 the rate of reftoring *fourfold*, not a-  
 bove a thoufand can be injuriously  
 got, that is about a Penny in the  
 Shilling. I am afraid that now a-days  
 there are few fuch moderate Oppreffors:  
 nay, it is poffible the proportion of  
 his Efte injuriously got might be  
 much lefs; more it could not eafily  
 be. But whatever it was, he does not  
 plead that by way of excufe for him-  
 felf; he freely confeffeth he had fin-  
 ned in this kind, and offers Reftituti-  
 on to the utmoft, much more than  
 the Law did require in fuch Cafes.

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 Ser. 12.

II. You have the Declaration our
 Saviour makes hereupon, of the truth
 of his Repentance and Converfion,
 and the happy ftate he was thereby
 put into, *This day is Salvation come to
 this Houfe.*

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The *Observation* I shall make from hence is this, That Restitution and Satisfaction for the Injuries we have done to others, is a proper and genuine Effect of true Repentance. I know the Text only speaks of Restitution in case of Oppression and Exaction: but because there is the same Reason why Restitution should be made for all other Injuries, I think I may without any force or violence to my Text, very well make it the Foundation of a more general Discourse concerning Restitution.

In the handling of this, I shall,

First, Open to you the Nature of this Duty.

Secondly, Confirm the truth of the Proposition, by shewing the Necessity of it.

Thirdly, Endeavour to perswade men to the discharge of this Necessary Duty.

First,

First, For the opening the Nature of this Duty, I will consider,

I. The Act.

II. The Latitude or Extent of the Object, as I may call it, or the Matter about which it is conversant.

III. The Manner how it is to be done.

IV. The Measure of it.

V. The Persons who are bound to make Restitution; and to whom it is to be made.

VI. The time in which it is to be done.

VII. The Order of doing it, where more are injured, and Restitution cannot be made at once to all.

I. For the Act. Restitution is nothing else but the making Reparation or Satisfaction to another, for the Injuries we have done him. It is to restore

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restore a Man to the good Condition, from which, contrary to Right and to our Duty, we have removed him. Restitution is only done in Case of Injury. Another Man may be damaged and prejudiced by us many ways, and we not be bound to make Restitution; because there are many Cases, wherein a Man deserves the prejudice we do to him. As when we are Instruments of inflicting upon a Man the Punishment which the Law doth sentence him to. And there are many Cases wherein we may be prejudicial to others, and cannot help it. As a Man that is sick of a Contagious Disease, may infect others that are about him: but he is not injurious to them; because it is not his fault, but his infelicity.

II. For the Latitude and Extent of the Object, as I may call it, or the matter about which it is conversant. It extends to all kind of Injuries, which may be reduced to these *two* Heads; either we injure a Person with or without his consent.

I. Some

1. Some Injuries are done to Persons with their Consent. Such are most of those Injuries which are done to the Souls of men, when we command, or counsel, or incourage them to Sin, or draw them in by our Example. For the Maxim *Volenti non fit injuria*, *There's no injury done to a Man that is willing*, is not so to be understood, as that a Man may not in some sort consent to his own wrong: for absolute freedom and willingness supposeth that a Man is wholly left to himself, and that he understands fully what he does. And in this Sense no Man sins willingly, that is, perfectly knowing and actually considering what he does; and Commands, and Perswasion, and Example are a kind of Violence: yet none of these hinder, but that a Man in these Cases may sufficiently consent to what he does. But yet he is not so perfectly free, as to excuse him that draws him into Sin by these ways. So likewise when a Man refuseth to do that which is his Duty without a Reward; for instance, to do Justice to another; he is injurious in so doing: but yet not
altoge-

Vol. 8. altogether without the consent of him whom he injures.

2. Injuries are done to Persons without their consent. And these, tho are not always the greatest Mischiefs, yet they are the greatest Injuries. And these Injuries are done either by fraud and cunning, or by violence and oppression; either by over-reaching another Man in Wit, or overbearing him by Power. And these usually either respect the Bodies of men, or their Estates, or their good Name. The Bodies of men. He that maims another, or does him any other Injury in his Limbs or Health, either by fraud or force, is bound, so far as he is able, to make Reparation for the Injury. Or they respect the Estates of men. If by cunning, or by violence, or by false Testimony or Accusation, thou hast hinder'd a Man of any Benefit, which otherwise would have come to him, thou art bound to Restitution. If by thy Power or Interest, by thy knowledge in the Law, or skill in Business, thou hast directly and avowedly helped and assisted another to do Injustice
to

to his Neighbour, thou art bound to Restitution; tho not as the principal, yet as the accessory. If thou hast over-reached thy Brother in any Contract, making Advantage of his ignorance or unskilfulness; if thou hast made a gain of his Necessity; if thou hast by thy Power and Interest, or by any more violent and forcible way detained his Right, or taken away that which was his; thou art bound to make Reparation for these Injuries, to restore that which thou hast borrowed, to return the pledge which thou hast wrongfully kept, to release unconscionable Forfeitures, to pay debts, to make satisfaction for frauds and cheats, to take off all unjust invasions and surprizals of Estates: yea tho the fraud be such that thou art not liable to make satisfaction by any Humane Law, yet thou art as much bound to it in Conscience to God and thy Duty, as if thou hadst stolen it, or taken it by violence from thy Neighbour. For in truth and reality, Fraud is as great an Injury as Violence, altho Humane Laws cannot take cognizance of it, so as to relieve every Man that is over-reached in a Bargain,

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Bargain: nay of the two it is worse; for whenever thou deceivest a Man in this kind, thou dost not only wrong him in Point of Estate, but thou abusest his Understanding.

And so likewise in respect of a Man's Fame and Reputation. If thou hast hurt any Man's good Name by slander or calumny, by false witness, by rendring him ridiculous, or any other way; thou art bound to give such Satisfaction as the thing is capable of; or if there be any other Injury which I have not mentioned, thou art obliged to make Reparation for it.

III. As to the manner how Restitution is to be made.

I. Thou art bound to do it voluntarily, and of thy own accord; tho the Person injured do not know, who it was that did him the Injury, tho he do not seek Reparation by Law. When a Man is forced by Law to make Restitution, it is not a Virtue, but Necessity; this is not a Fruit of Repentance and a good Mind, but

of

of good Law. And that thou dost not do it, unless the Law compel thee to it, is an Argument thou wouldst not have done it, if thou couldst have avoided it. And tho the thing be done, yet *thou* hast not done it, but *the Law*; and unless thou heartily repent of thy Crime, the Injury still lies at thy Door, and in God's account thou art as guilty as if no Restitution had been made. Not that thou art bound in this Case to make new Restitution over again; but thou art bound to bewail thy neglect, that thou didst not do it voluntarily and without the compulsion of the Law.

2. Thou must do it in kind, if the thing he capable of it, and the injur'd Party demand it. Thou must restore the very thing which thou hadst deprived thy Neighbour of, if it be such a thing as can be restored, and be still in thy Power; unless he voluntarily accept of some other thing in exchange.

3. If thou canst not restore it in kind, thou art bound to restore it in value

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value, in something that is as good. As for spiritual Injuries done to the Souls of men, we are bound to make such Reparation and Compensation as we can. Those whom we have drawn into Sin, and engaged in wicked Courses, by our influence and example, or by neglect of our Duty towards them, we are so far as becomes the Relation we stand in to them, to make acknowledgment of our fault, to endeavour by our Instruction and Counsel to reclaim them from those Sins which we led them into, and *to recover them out of the snare of the Devil*; and should never be at rest till we have done as much or more for the furtherance of their Salvation, and helping them forwards towards Heaven, as we did contribute before to their Ruin and Destruction. If we have violated any ones Chastity, we are bound to Marry them, if it was done upon that Condition, and if they require it: thou art bound to keep and maintain those Children which are the Fruit of thy Lust, and to make Reparation to the Person whom thou hast injured, by Dowry or otherwise.

If thou hast defrauded and injured any Man in his good Name, thou art obliged to make him a Compensation by acknowledgment of thy fault, by a studious vindication of him, and by doing him honour and repairing his Credit in all fitting ways. And if the Injury be irreparable (as it frequently happens, that we can hardly so effectually vindicate a Man, as we can defame him; and it is seldom seen that those wounds which are given to mens Reputation are perfectly healed) I say if the injury be irreparable, especially if it prove really prejudicial to a Man in his Calling and Civil Interest; if no other Satisfaction will be accepted, it is to be made in Money, *which, Solomon says, answers all things*; and the rather, because the Reason and Equity of human Laws hath thought fit to assign this way of Satisfaction in many Cases upon Actions of Scandal and Defamation. And whatever the Law would give in any Case, if it could be proved, that is the least we are bound in Conscience to do, when we are guilty to our
B b selves,

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selves, tho' the Law cannot take hold of us.

So likewise, if thou hast wounded a Man, thou art bound to pay the Cure, to repair to him and his Relations the Disability for his Calling, and his way of Livelyhood and Subsistence, which he hath contracted by thy injury. And so for false Imprisonment, the real Detriment which comes to him by it, is to be made amends for: and so in all other Cases, the injured Person is so far as is possible to be restored to the good Condition in which he was before the Injury.

IV. As to the Measure and Proportion of the Restitution we are to make. *Zachens* here offers *fourfold*, which was much beyond what any Law required in like Cases. The Measure of Restitution by the Judicial Law of the *Jews*, did very much vary according to the kind and degree of the Injury. In some Cases a Man was only bound to simple Restitution; but then he was to do it to the full, *Exod.* 22. 5, 6. And so if that which

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is another Man's be delivered unto his Neighbour to keep, and be stolen from him, he is to make Restitution thereof, Ver. 12. And so if a Man borrow ought of his Neighbour, and it be hurt or die, the owner thereof not being with it, he shall surely make it good, Ver. 14. But for all manner of trespasses by way of theft, whether it be for Ox, for Ass, for Sheep, for Rayment, or for any manner of lost thing, which another challengeth to be his, he whom the Judge shall condemn, shall pay double to his Neighbour, Ver. 9. that is, if it be of a living Creature, if the theft be found in his hands alive, whether it be Ox or Ass, or Sheep, he shall restore double, Ver. 4. But if a Man did steal an Ox or a Sheep, and did kill it or sell it, he was to restore five Oxen for an Ox, and four Sheep for a Sheep. And thus we find David judged upon Nathan's Parable of the Rich Man, who had taken the Poor Man's only Lamb, and kill'd and drest it for a Traveller that came to him, 2 Sam. 12. 6. He shall restore the Lamb fourfold. Now the Reason of this seems to be partly because of the advantage and usefulness of those Creatures above any o-

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other ; and partly because when they were once kill'd or alienated, a Man could not without great trouble and difficulty make Discovery, which hazard of not discovering seems to be accounted for in the Restitution : but if a Man did voluntarily offer Restitution, before he was prosecuted, for any thing that was taken by violence, or unjustly detained from his Neighbour, then he was only to *restore the principal, and to add a fifth part thereto, and to offer up an Offering to the Lord, and so his atonement was made, Levit. 6. 1. &c.*

So that the highest proportion was *a fourth or fifth part*, and that only in the particular Case of *Sheep or Oxen stolen away, and kill'd or alienated afterwards*. Indeed Solomon speaks of a *sevenfold* Restitution, *Prov. 6. 31.* Where he saith, *If a thief be found, he shall restore sevenfold, even all the substance of his House ;* where *seven* is only a number of Perfection, and the meaning is, he shall make perfect and full Restitution according to the Law, so far as his Substance or Estate will reach.

So

So that it seems *Zacheus* in restoring *fourfold* did out-do the utmost severity of the Law ; which in Case of fraud and oppression was but *double*, if demanded ; if voluntarily offer'd, was the principal and a *fifth part* added : but to testifie the truth of his Repentance, and his hearty Sorrow for the injuries he had done, he punisheth himself beyond what the Law would have done.

I do not say that this Example binds as to this measure and proportion : nay, I do not say we are bound to the proportions of the Law ; for that only concerned the Nation of the *Jews* : but altho' we be free from the *Letter* of the Law, yet we are tyed to the *Equity* of it, As to the substance of the Duty of Restitution, we are bound to that by the Law of Nature. As to the Measure and Proportion, the Equity of the Judicial Law in its Proportions, and of *Zacheus* his Example, ought to be considerable to us.

But to speak more particularly concerning the Measures and Proportions

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of Restitution, I shall lay down these Propositions.

1. Where Restitution can be made in kind, or the Injury can be certainly valued, we are to restore the thing, or the value.

2. We are bound to restore the thing, with the natural increase of it, that is, to satisfy for the loss sustained in the mean time, and the gain hinder'd.

3. Where the thing cannot be restored, and the value of it is not certain, we are to give reasonable Satisfaction, that is, according to a middle estimation; not the highest, nor the lowest of things of the kind. The injur'd Person can demand no more, and strict Justice requires no more. But it is safe for him that hath done the Injury, rather to exceed than to fall short.

4. We are at least to give by way of Restitution what the Law would give; for that is generally equal, and in most

most Cases rather favourable than rigorous.

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5. A Man is not only bound to Restitution for the Injury which he did, but for all that directly follows upon his injurious Act, tho' it were beyond his intention. For the first injury being wilful, thou art presumed to will all that which directly followed upon it; according to that rule, *Involuntarium ortum ex voluntario censetur pro voluntario*. We are presumed to will that which follows upon a voluntary action, tho' we did not intend it. For instance, if a Man maliciously and knowingly set fire upon another Man's House, tho' he intended only an injury to that particular Person, yet if a wind come and drive the fire to his Neighbours at some distance, tho' he did not intend this, yet because the first Act was unlawful, he is liable to satisfy for all the direct consequences of it. If a Man wound another without any intention of killing him, and the Wound prove mortal, tho' there was no probability that Death would ensue upon it, the Man is bound, because the first Act was injurious, to

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make

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make Reparation to his Relations for the damage they sustain by his Death; and if they did depend solely upon him, who died by such injury, thou art bound to maintain them.

6. Because those who have lived in a Trade and Course of Injustice, can hardly remember all the particular injuries they have done, so as to make exact Satisfaction for them, it will not be amiss over and besides to give something to the Poor. So *Zacheus* does here, *Half of my Estate I give to the Poor, and if I have taken any thing, &c.*

V. The Persons who are concern'd in Restitution. And here I shall consider,

First, The Persons who are bound to make Restitution.

Secondly, The Persons to whom it is to be made.

First, The Persons who are bound to make Restitution. In general, they who have done the injury, or they who

who come into their stead, so as in Law or Equity the Injury devolves and descends upon them. But for the clearer stating of this, I shall lay down several Propositions, which may serve to resolve a great many Cases, that may be put concerning Persons obliged to make Restitution.

1. If the Injury be done solely by one, without Complices and Partakers in the Crime, he alone is responsible, and wholly bound to make Satisfaction; I mean, he only is bound so long as he lives, but if the injury descends as a burden upon the Estate, then he who enjoys the Estate becomes bound to make Satisfaction; as I shall shew afterwards.

2. If the Injury was done by more, who did all equally concur to the doing of it, they are all equally bound to make Satisfaction; and they are bound to concur together to that Purpose; and in Case of such concurrence, every one is not bound to satisfy for the whole, but *pro ratâ parte*, for his share; provided they do among them make full Satisfaction.

3. If

3. If all will not concur, those that are willing are bound among them to make Reparation for the Injury: nay, if all the rest refuse to joyn with thee in it, thou art bound *in solidum* to make full Reparation so far as thou art able; because every one was guilty of the whole Injury. For instance, if four men conspire together to cheat a Man, or to rob him, any one of these, if the rest refuse, is bound to make entire Satisfaction; yea, tho' he was only partaker in the Benefit; because, as I said before, he is guilty of the whole Injury.

4. If the Injury be done by more, who do unequally concur to the doing of it, he that is Principal is chiefly and principally bound to make Satisfaction: and here I do not take *Principal*, strictly in the Sense of the Law, but in the Sense of Equity; not for him always who is the more immediate cause of the Injury, but for him who was the greatest cause, and by whose influence chiefly it was procured and done: but if the principal will

will not, the Accessories and Instruments are bound, at least for their share, and according to the proportion of the Hand they had in it. But if the Principal do satisfy in the name, and upon the account of the rest, then the Accessories are free from an Obligation to Restitution, and are only bound to Repentance.

5. If the Injury devolve upon another, by descending as a burden upon the Estate, he who enjoys the Estate is bound to make Satisfaction. And when Injuries do thus descend as Burdens and Incumbrances upon Estates, and when not, the Civil Laws of the place where we live must determine: but then where my Case falls within the compass of the Law, I am bound voluntarily to satisfy without the Compulsion of the Law. For instance, If an Estate fall to me charged with a debt, which hath been unjustly detained, I am bound voluntarily to discharge the debt, so soon as it appears to me, before I am compell'd thereto by the Law.

6. As

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6. As for Personal Injuries which do not lie as Burdens upon the Estate, nor do by the Law descend upon the Son or Heir, tho' in strict Justice a Man be not bound to make Compensation for them, for that would be endless, & *infinitum in lege repudiatur*, No Law can take notice of that which is infinite and endless; for *quæ exitum non habent habentur pro impossibilibus*, Those things which have no end, to which no bounds can be set, are esteemed among things impossible, to which no Man can be obliged: but tho' in strict Justice the Heir be not bound to make Reparation, for the Personal injuries of him whom he succeeds in the Estate, yet in many Cases it is equitable, and generous, and christian, for such Persons to make some kind of Reparation for palpable and notorious Injuries. For instance, If I be Heir to an Estate, part of which I know certainly was injuriously gotten, it is not only Christian, but Prudent, to make Satisfaction in the Case to the party injur'd, if certainly known; if not, to give it to the Poor; for

for by this means I may take out the *Moth*, which was bred by injustice in the Estate, and rub off the *Rust*, that sticks to the Gold and Silver, which was got by oppression or fraud, and so free the remaining part of the Estate from that secret and Divine *Nemesis* which attends it and follows it. And for the same Reason, it is very Noble and Christian, for the Son and Heir of an unjust Father, to make some Reparation for his Father's injuries by Restitution, if the thing be capable of it: if not, by doing all good Offices to the injured Persons, which is some kind of Compensation. And in this Case the Obligation is greater, because by this means a Man does not only do what in him lies, to cut off *the curse*, which by his Father's oppression and injustice is *intail'd* upon the Family and Estate: but likewise, because a Son ought much more to be concern'd for his Father, than any other Person, and to consult the Honour and Reputation both of him and his own Family; and the Reparation which the Son makes, is in some sort the Father's Act, because he succeeds him and comes into his stead.

Secondly,

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Secondly, As to the Persons to whom Satisfaction is to be made. For the Resolution of those Cases which may fall under this Head, I shall lay down these Propositions.

1. If the injured Person be certainly known, and be alive and extant, the Satisfaction is to be made to him.

2. If he be not alive, or which is all one, not to be found or come at, Satisfaction is to be made to his nearest Relations, his Wife, or Children, or Brothers, or other nearest Kindred. The Reason is, because Satisfaction being due, and I having no right to keep that which I have injuriously gotten, if I cannot restore it to the Party himself, I ought in all Reason to place it there where I may most reasonably presume the Party injur'd would have bestowed his Estate, and this part of it among the rest, had he been possessor of it. And by the same Reason that I am bound thus to restore the part of his Estate which I have injuriously taken or detained from him, I am likewise obliged to give Satisfaction to the same

same Person for any other Injury : for to whomsoever I would pay a debt due to one that is deceased, to the same Person I ought to give Satisfaction for other Injuries, by which a debt is, tho' not formally, yet virtually contracted.

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3. If the Party injured be not certainly known, or have no near Relations known to me, in that Case I think it very adviseable to give so much to the Poor, or to some Charitable use ; or if the Party injured be not capable of proper Satisfaction, as sometimes it is a Community and Body of men that we have injured, in this Case it is proper to repair the Injuries to Communities or Bodies of men, by equivalent good Offices, or by some publick good Work, which may be of common Benefit and Advantage. This is the *Fifth* thing I proposed to speak to, the Persons concern'd in Restitution ; both the Persons who are bound to make Restitution, and the Persons to whom it is to be made. Of the rest hereafter.

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SERMON XIII.

The Nature and Necessity of
Restitution.

The Second Sermon on this Text.

LUKE XIX. 8, 9.

*And if I have taken any thing from
Man by false accusation, I restore
him fourfold. And Jesus said unto
him, This day is Salvation come to
this House.*

IN speaking to these words, I pro-
posed to consider,

First, The Nature of this Duty of
Restitution.

Secondly, To shew the Necessity of it.

Thirdly, To perswade Men to the
discharge of it.

Cc

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In treating of the Nature of Restitution, I have consider'd,

I. The Act.

II. The Extent of it.

III. The Manner how it is to be perform'd.

IV. The Measure of it.

V. The Persons who are to make Restitution; and the Persons to whom Restitution is to be made. I now proceed to consider,

VI. The Time when Restitution is to be made. In these Cases a Man is not tyed up to an instant, not just to the present time; unless the Case be such, that he can never do it, if he do not do it then. As if a Man lie upon his Death-Bed; that is a Case that admits of no delay, a Man should hasten Restitution, as he would do the making of his Will, and the disposal of his Estate; lest if he do not do it presently, he lose his opportunity of doing it for ever: but ordinarily, a Man is not so strictly tyed up to moments, and to the present time. It is sufficient that a Man be for the present resolved to do it, so soon as morally he can, so soon as he would do other Actions of great moment and concernment.

ment. And to this purpose the Text  gives us an excellent Pattern; *Zache-*
us, the same day he repented, took up
this Resolution, and to oblige himself
effectually to put it in Execution, he
publicly declares it, and before all the
People offers to make Restitution to all
whom he had injur'd.

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Therefore take heed of all unnecessary delays in these matters: for tho' God would accept of a firm and sincere Resolution in this Case, if a Person thus resolved should, before he could bring his Resolution to effect, happen to be cut off by Death, or be otherwise render'd incapable of doing it; I say, tho God would accept such a Resolution as this, yet he will not interpret that to be a sincere Resolution, which a Man is negligent to put in practice: for every neglect of putting our Resolution in practice, is a degree of quitting and altering it; and he who did not do what he was resolved to do, when he had an opportunity and ability of doing it, is justly presumed to have let fall his Resolution.

Therefore let no Man presume upon his good Intention and Resolution

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in this kind; for they are only acceptable to God, so far as they are sincere and real; and they are only so far sincere and real, as the Man that makes them, is ready to put them in Execution, so soon as morally he can. And if thou carelessly and supinely trifle away thy opportunities in this kind, God may likewise deprive thee of an opportunity for ever. For all the while thou wilfully neglectest to make Restitution, thou art guilty of the Injury; and there are hardly two Sins that cry louder to God for a quick and speedy revenge, than Injustice and Oppression, Deceit and Fraud. God many times takes such Causes into his more immediate cognizance, *1 Thess. 4. 6. Let no Man deceive or go beyond his Brother in any thing: for God is the avenger of such.* And David tells us, that God in a peculiar manner abhors the Blood-thirsty and deceitful Man; and threatens that he shall not live out half his days. And God by the Prophet, *Mal. 3. 5. tells us, that He will be a swift witness against the oppressors.* And if God be so swift to take vengeance upon such Persons, surely then they are concerned to be very quick

quick and speedy in making Satisfaction for their Injuries and Oppressions, lest Divine Vengeance prevent them, and instead of making Reparation to Men, they be call'd upon to make Satisfaction to the Justice of God; and you know who hath said it, that *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

You therefore that have hitherto neglected this Duty, delay it no longer; by all means discharge your Consciences of this Burden, before you come to lie upon a Death-Bed. Then the Consciences of the worst of Men begin to work, like a Stomach oppress'd and surcharged with meat; and then they are willing for their ease to vomit up those Estates, which they have devoured by fraud and injustice; then they begin to consider the difficulty of being saved, and to fear that it will be impossible for them ever to enter in at the *strait Gate*, thus laden with the spoils of violence and deceit; even those that have the hardest and most seared Consciences, will be touched with the Sense of such great Sins at such a time: but do not thou

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defer this work to that time, for these *two* Reasons.

1. Because it cannot be so acceptable to God, to make Restitution at such a time, as when thou art in health and in hopes of longer Life. To give a Man his own, when thou canst enjoy it and use it no longer, this is next to detaining of it.

2. Because in all probability the Restitution which is then made will not prove so effectual. What thou dost thy self, that thou art sure is done: but what thou leavest to be done by thy Executors, and chargest upon them, thou art not sure will be done; ten to one but if they can find out any trick and evasion in Law, either to delay or avoid the doing of it, it shall either never be done, or very slowly. This is the *sixth* thing, the time when Restitution is to be made.

But before I leave this Head, there is one case very proper to be considered, which relates to this Circumstance of Time, and that is concerning Injuries of a very antient date; that is, how far this Duty of Restitution is to look backward, and whether it doth not expire by tract of Time? For answer

swer to this, I shall lay down these Propositions.

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1. At what distance of time soever the Law would in the Case make Reparation and give Satisfaction, we are undoubtedly bound in Conscience voluntarily to give it. I deliver this generally; because, tho it be possible some Civil Laws may be in some Cases unreasonable in this matter, yet they are our best Rule and Guide; and speaking generally and for the most part, they are as equitable as the Reason of Man could devise. Not that we are to tie our selves strictly to the Law, so as not to go farther, if Reason and Equity require; for, as *Seneca* says, *Parum est ad legem bonum esse, It is no great argument of goodness, to be just as good as the Law requires.* Therefore I think it will very well become a good Man, in many Cases, rather to be better than the Law, than to keep strictly to it.

2. In Cases where the Law hath not determined the time, we may do well to observe a proportion to what the Law hath determined in other Cases, which come nearest our own Case.

3. When the Injury is so old, that the right which the injured Person

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had to Reparation is reasonably presumed to be quitted and forsaken, then the Obligation to Satisfaction ceaseth and expires. The Reason is plain, because every Man may recede from his own Right, and give it up to another; and where a Man may reasonably be presumed to have parted with his right to another, the Obligation to Restitution ceaseth, and the right of claiming it. Now *when* a thing begins, *haberi pro derelicto*, that is, *when* a right may reasonably be presumed to be quitted and forsaken, cannot in general be determined: but this must be estimated according to the importance of the right and thing in Controversie, as whether it be more or less considerable; and according to the Reason and Determination of Laws about things of this Nature. To illustrate this Rule by Instances. The Saxons, Danes, and Normans, did at several times invade and conquer this Nation, and conquer'd it we will suppose unjustly, and consequently did hold and possess that which truly belonged to others, contrary to right; and several of the Posterity of each of these do probably to this day hold what was then

then injuriously gotten; I say, in this Case, the Obligation to Satisfaction and Restitution is long since expired, and the Original Title, which those who were dispossessed had, is reasonably presumed to be long since quitted and forsaken; and that for very wise Reasons in Law and Government; because it would confound and unsettle all Estates, if every thing, the Original Title whereof is naught, were to be restored; and it is but equal to presume, that all Mankind are so reasonable, as to quit their right in such Cases, rather than to cause endless disturbances, and to have the guilt of Injustice everlastingly perpetuated. And tho it be a rule in Civil Law, that *Vitiosum initio, tractu temporis non convalescit*, A Title originally bad can never by time be made just; it is only true thus far, that time in it self doth not alter the Nature of things: but considering the necessities of the World, and the infinite difficulties of retrieving an ancient Right, and the inconveniences and disturbances that would thereby redound to Human Society, it is better that an injury should be perpetuated, than that a great inconvenience should

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should come by endeavouring to redress it; so that altho considering a thing simply in it self, an Injury is so far from being lessened or null'd by tract of Time, that it is increased, and the longer it continues, the greater it is; yet by accident, and in compliance with the necessity of things, length of time may give a right to that which was at first injuriously possess'd. *Judg. 11. 26.* Thus *Jephthah* reasons with the King of *Ammon*, who had made War for recovery of an antient Right, as he suppos'd. And tho' the Instances I have given of the unjust Conquest of a Nation be great and publick; yet the same is to be determined proportionably in less and particular Cases. And thus I have done with the *sixth* thing.

VII. And *lastly*, As to the order of Restitution. When we have injur'd a great many, and are not able to make Restitution to all at once, our best Prudence and Discretion must govern us herein. Because no certain Rule can be given, which will reach all Cases, I will only say this in general, that it is reasonable first to make Reparation for the oldest and greatest Injuries; and

and *ceteris paribus*, if all other Considerations be equal, to consider those first, who are most necessitous, and if there be any other special Reason and Obligation arising from the Nature of the Injury, or the Circumstances of the Person injur'd, to have regard to them. I come now in the

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Second place, To confirm the Truth of the Proposition, That to make Restitution and Satisfaction to those whom we have injur'd, is a proper and necessary Fruit of a true Repentance. And this will appear, if we consider these *two* things.

I. Our Obligation to this Duty.

II. The Nature of Repentance.

I. Our Obligation to this Duty.

Upon the same account that we are obliged to Repentance, we are obliged to Restitution; and both these Obligations arise from natural Equity and Justice. All Sin is an injury done; and tho' Repentance be not strictly Satisfaction, yet it is the best we can make; and he is unjust, who having done an Injury, does not make the best Reparation he can. But now there are some Sins, in which, besides the injury that is done to God by them,

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them, upon the general account, as they are Sins and Violations of his Laws, there is likewise a particular Injury done to Men; and such are all those, the effect whereof redounds to the prejudice of other Men: such are Fraud and Oppression, and all other Sins whereby others are injured. So that in these kinds of Sins, there are two things considerable, the irregularity and viciousness of the Act, and the evil Effects of it upon other Men: the former respects the Law, and calls for Sorrow and Repentance for our Violation of it; the latter respects the Person that is injured, and calls for Satisfaction and Restitution. So that our Obligation to Restitution is founded in the immutable and indispensable Law of Nature, which is *To do that to another, which we would have another do to us.* We would have no Man be injurious to us, or if he have been so, we would have him make Satisfaction and Reparation to us of the Injury he hath done; and we take it grievously from him, if he do not. Now nothing is more just and equitable, than that we should do that to others, which we in the like Case would

would expect from them: for the very same obligation that lies upon others towards us, does lie upon us in regard to others.

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II. This will yet further appear, if we consider the Nature of Repentance, which is to be sorry for what we have done, and not to do the like for the future. Now if thou be sorry for what thou hast done, thou wishest with all thy heart thou hadst not done it; and if thou dost so, thou wilt undo, as much as in thee lieth, what thou hast done. Now the best way to undo an Injury, is to make Reparation for it; and till we do this, we continue in the Sin. For if it was a Sin, to do the injury at first, it is the same continued, not to make Satisfaction; and we do not cease to commit the Sin, so long as we detain that which is another's Right. Nothing but Restitution can stop the progress of Sin: for if it be a Sin to take that which is another Man's from him by fraud or violence, it is the same continued and virtually repeated, to detain and keep it from him; and nothing more contrary to Repentance, than to continue in the Sin thou pretendest to repent of.



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of. For how art thou sorry for doing of it, if thou continuest to do it, if thou wilt go on to do it and do it again? How dost thou hate thy Sin, if thou enjoy the Benefit and reap the Advantage of it? If thou dost this, it is an Argument thou lovest thy Sin still: for thou didst never love it for it self, but for the Profit of it; and so long as thou retainest that, thou canst not be quit of the Sin. Thou holdest fast thy Sin so long as thou refuseth to make Satisfaction for it; and Repentance without Restitution differs as much from true Repentance, as continuance in Sin does from the forsaking of it. *Si res aliena non redditur, non agitur pœnitentia, sed fingitur*; so St. Augustin; If we do not restore that which we have injuriously detained from another, our Repentance is not real, but feigned and hypocritical, and will not be effectual to the obtaining of our Pardon. 'Tis a very common, but a true and terrible saying, *Non dimittitur peccatum, nisi restituatur ablatum*, No Remission without Restitution. If we will inherit the Profit and Advantage of Sin, we cannot think it unreasonable

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or unjust that we should inherit the Punishment of it.

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When the Scripture speaks of Repentance, it frequently mentions Restitution as a proper Fruit and Effect of it, and as a necessary and indispensable Condition of Pardon and Life. Ezek. 33. 14, 15, 16. *Again, when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die: if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right; if the wicked restore the pledg, give again that he had robbed, &c.* As if he had said, when I denounce Death and Destruction to the wicked, there is but this one way to escape it, and that is by Repentance; but then take notice, what a Repentance it is, that will avail to this end; it is not a bewailing our selves, and lamenting over our Sins, but a forsaking of them and returning to our Duty; *If we turn from our sin, and do that which is lawful and right.* For instance, if he have been guilty of Injustice and Oppression; if he leave his Course, and deal justly and righteously with his Neighbour, and not only so, but he also make Restitution for the injury he hath done, and restore what he hath unjustly de-  
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tain and taken away ; If he restore the pledge, and give again that he hath robbed, and do no Injustice for the future, but walk in the Statutes of Life without committing iniquity ; upon these Terms and no other he shall live, he shall not die. Yea the very light of Nature could suggest thus much to the People of *Niniveh*, that there was no hope, without this Fruit of Repentance, of appeasing God's Wrath. Therefore the King and the Princes, after all the external solemnity of fasting, and sackcloth, and crying mightily, they decree that Every one should turn from the evil of his ways, and from the violence that was in their Hands, *ut rapinâ manus vacuefaciat, & rapta restituat, sine quo non est vera pœnitentia* ; so Grot. upon the place, That he empty his hands of the spoils of Rapine and Oppression, that is, that he make Restitution, without which there can be no Repentance : And upon their doing this, 'tis said, that God spared them, Ver. 10. And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil ways. 'Tis not said, that he saw their fasting and sackcloth, but He saw their works, the real Fruits and Effects of their Repentance ; and upon this



this it was that God repented of the evil he said he would do to them, and he did it not. And elsewhere we find, that God speaks with great Indignation of the most solemn Repentance, which is not accompanied with this Fruit, *Isa. 58.3, 4, 5, 6.* The People tell God how they had fasted and afflicted their Soul, and made their voice to be heard on high: but God despiseth all this, because it was not accompanied with this Fruit of Repentance, *Is it such a fast as I have chosen? &c.* There is so much of natural Justice and Equity in Restitution, and it is so proper a Fruit of Repentance, that as *Grotius* observes, it is not only the Doctrine of the *Jews* and *Christians*, but of *Heathens* and *Mahumetans*, that the Repentance which doth not produce this Fruit is feigned, and will never avail with God for Pardon and Mercy. Thus much for Confirmation of this Doctrine.

The *Third* and *last* thing I proposed was to perswade to the Practice of this Duty; and this may serve by way of Application of the Doctrine of Restitution. The use we shall make of it is,

*First*, To perswade Men to the Practice of this difficult Duty. I doubt not but the Arguments I have used are

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sufficient to convince us of the Equity and Necessity of Restitution; but what Arguments shall I use to perswade to the Practice and Exercise of it? When we press Men to their Duty, tho we have some Advantages on our side, yet we have also great Disadvantages. We have this advantage, that we have the Reason and Consciences of Men on our side: but then we have this disadvantage, that we have to contend either with the Lusts or Interests of Men, or both: now that these are usually more powerful, is evident, in that the Lusts and Interests of Men do so frequently byass and draw them to do things contrary to Reason and Conscience. When we perswade Men to be just, and to make Restitution to those whom they have injur'd, 'tis true we have not to contend with the Lusts of Men, with any corrupt and vicious Inclination of Nature. There are some Sins that have their rise from Mens natural Tempers, as Passion and Lust, and those sensual Vices that abound in the World: but there's nothing in any Man's natural Temper and Disposition that inclines him to be unjust, no Man's Complexion doth particularly dispose him to lie or steal, to defraud his

his Neighbour, or detain his Right from him; it is only the Interests of Men that prompt them to these things; and they are upon this account the more inexcusable, because no Man is inclined to these Sins from particular Temper and Constitution; so that an unjust Man is in ordinary Cases and Circumstances a greater Sinner, than a Drunkard or a Lustful Man, because no Man can pretend to be hurried away by the strong Propension and Inclination of his Nature, to cheat his Brother; but altho when we perswade Men to be just, we have not the Lusts of Men to contend withal, yet we have another powerful Adversary, and that is the Interests of Men, which is one of the *Chief Rulers and Governors of this World*; so that when we press Men to Restitution, we touch them in their Interest, which is a very touchy and tender thing; when we tell them that without Restitution no Man can repent and be saved, they think this to be *a very hard saying*, and they know not *how to bear it*.

But certainly it hath all the Reason and Equity in the World on its side. If it be so hard for them to restore that which is another Man's, is it not much



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harder for him whom thou hast injured, to lose that which is his own? Make it thine own Case; wouldst thou not think it much harder to have thy right detained from thee by another, than for another to part with that which is not his own?

But I am sensible how little it is, that Reason will sway with Men against their Interest; therefore the best Argument that I can use will be to satisfy Men, that upon a true and just account, it is not so much their Interest, to retain what they have unjustly got, as to make Restitution. And this I shall do by shewing Men, that to make Restitution is their true Interest, both in respect of themselves, and of their Posterity.

I. In respect to themselves. It is better both in respect of our present Condition in this World, and of our future State.

1. In respect of our present Condition in this World, and that both in respect of our outward Estate, and our inward Peace and Tranquillity.

(1.) In respect of our outward Estate. If we have any belief of the Providence of God, that his Blessing can prosper an Estate, and his Curse consume it and make it moulder away, we cannot

cannot but judg it highly our Interest to clear our Estates of Injustice by Restitution; and by this means to free them from God's Curse. For if any of our Estate be unjustly gotten, it is enough to draw down God's Curse upon all that we have; it is like a moth in our Estate, which will insensibly consume it; it is like a secret Poison, which will diffuse it self through the whole; like a little Land *in Capite*, which brings the whole Estate into *Wardship*.

Hear how God threatens to blast Estates unjustly gotten, *Job 20. 12, &c.* concluding with these words, *This is the portion of a wicked Man*, that is, of an unjust Man. *Jer. 17. 11. As a Partridge sitteth on Eggs, and hatcheth them not, so he that getteth Riches and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool.* Men many times live to see the folly of their Injustice and Oppression, and their Estates wither away before their Eyes; and by the just revenge of God, they are deprived of them in the midst of their days. So that the best way to fix an Estate, and to secure it to our selves, is by Restitution to free it from God's Curse; and when we have done that, how much soever we

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may diminish our Estate by it, we may look upon our selves as having a better Estate than we had; better, because we have God's Blessing with that which remains. If we believe the Bible, we cannot doubt of this. The Spirit of God tells us this from the Observation of the wisest Men, *Psal. 37. 16. A little that a righteous Man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked. Prov. 16. 8. Better is a little with righteousness, than great Revenues without Right.*

(2.) In respect of inward Peace and Tranquillity, it is highly our Interest to make Restitution. No Man can enjoy an Estate, that does not enjoy himself; and nothing puts a Man more out of the Possession of himself, than an unquiet Conscience; and there are no kind of Sins lie heavier upon a Man's Conscience, than those of Injustice; because they are committed against the clearest natural Light, and there's the least natural Temptation to them. They have these two great Aggravations, that they are Sins most against knowledg, and have most of Will in them. There needs no Revelation to convince Men of Sins of Injustice and Oppression; every Man hath those Principles born with him,



him, which will sufficiently acquaint him, that he ought not to be injurious to another. There's nothing that relates to our Duty, that a Man can know with greater certainty than this, that Injustice is a Sin. And as it is a Sin most against knowledg, so it hath most of Will in it. Men are hurried away to other Sins by the strong and violent Propensions of their Nature: but no Man is inclined by his Temper and Constitution, to Fraud and Oppression; and the less there is of Nature in any Sin, there's the less of Necessity, and consequently it is the more voluntary. Now the greater the Aggravations of any Sin are, the greater is the Guilt; and the greater the Guilt is, the more unquiet our Consciences will be: so that if thou have any regard to the Interest of thine own Peace, if that be considerable to thee, which to wise Men is the most valuable thing in the World, do not for a little Wealth continue in those Sins, which will create perpetual disturbance to thee, and imbitter all the Pleasures of thy Life. Hear how Job describes the Condition of the wicked Oppressors in the place before cited, Job 20. 12, &c. *He shall not rejoyce in them, because he hath oppressed, because he*

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*hath violently taken away a House which he builded not, surely he shall not feel quietness in his belly: that is, he shall have no inward Peace and Contentment in the midst of all his outward Enjoyments; but his ill-gotten Estate will work in his Conscience, and gripe him, as if a Man had taken down Poison into his Belly.*

2. But chiefly, in respect of our future Estate in another World, it is every man's interest to make Restitution. Without Repentance we are ruined for ever, and without Restitution no Repentance. *No unrighteous Man hath any inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ.* If thou continue in thy fraud and oppression, and carry these Sins with thee into another World, they will hang as a Millstone about thy Neck, and sink thee into eternal Ruin. He that wrongs his Brother hates him, and *he that hateth his Brother is a murderer, and ye know that no murderer hath eternal Life abiding in him,* 1 John 3. 15. Rom. 1. 18. *The wrath of God is revealed from Heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of Men.* So that if it be Mens Interest to escape the Wrath of God, it concerns us to make Reparation for those Injuries which will expose us to it. That is a dreadful Text,

James

James 5. 1, 2, 3, 4. Go to now ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments moth-eaten: Your Gold and Silver is canker'd, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire: ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold! the Hire of the labourers which have reaped down your Fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth; and the cries of them which have reaped, are enter'd into the ears of the Lord of Sabbaoth. Do not by detaining the treasures of wickedness, treasure up to your selves wrath against the day of wrath: do not make your selves Miserable for ever, that you may be Rich for a little while: do not for a little Silver and Gold, forfeit the eternal inheritance, which was not purchased with corruptible things, but with the precious Blood of the Son of God: And if this Consideration, which is the weightiest in the World, will not prevail with Men, I can only say with the Angel, Rev. 22. 11. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still, let him continue in his Injustice at his Peril, and remember what is added at the 12th verse, Behold! I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every Man according as his work shall be.

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II. In respect of our Children and Posterity, it is greatly our interest to make Restitution. God many times suffers an Estate got by oppression to prosper for a little while: but there is a curse attends it, which descends upon the Estate like an incumbrance; and Parents many times when they think they entail an Estate, they entail Poverty upon their Children. *Job 20. 10.* speaking of the Children of the Oppressor, he saith, *His Children shall seek to please the Poor, and his hands shall restore their Goods.* And *Job 21. 19.* *God layeth up his iniquity for his Children.* Thou layest up Riches for thy Children; and God lays up thine Iniquity and Injustice for them, the Curse that belongs to them. *Hab. 2. 9, 10, 11.* *Wo to him that coveteth an evil covetousness, or gaineth an evil gain to his House, &c.* Thou thoughtest to raise thy Family by those ways; but thou hast consulted shame to thy House. No such effectual way to ruin thy Family, as Injustice and Oppression. As then you would not transmit a Curse to your Children, and devolve Misery upon your Family, free your Estates from the burden and weight of what is other Mens, lest by God's just Judgment and secret Providence, that little

little which you injuriously detain from others, carry away your whole Estate to them and their Family. God's Providence many times makes abundant Restitution, when we will not.

Having now endeavoured to satisfie Men, that it is their truest Interest, to make Restitution for the Injuries they have done to others, it remains only that I should answer an Objection or two, which Men are apt to make against this Duty.

*First*, Men say they are asham'd to do it. *Ans.* It is not matter of shame, but of Praise and Commendation. But it may be thou wilt say, It is matter of shame to have injur'd another, and this is the way to lay open thy shame. Indeed if the Injury were publick, the Restitution ought to be so too, as the only way to take off the shame of the Injury. For thy Restitution doth not in this Case publish thy shame, but thy honesty: but if the Injury was private, thou mayst preserve thy own Credit, by concealing thy self; and provided thou do the thing effectually, thou mayst be as prudent, as to the manner of doing it, as thou pleatest.

*Secondly*, Another Objection is the prejudice it will be to Mens Estates. But this

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this I have answer'd already, by shewing that it is more their Interest to make Restitution, than to continue in the Sin. I shall only add, that, as our Saviour reasons in another Case, *It is profitable for thee, that one of thy members should perish, rather than that thy whole Body should be cast into Hell*: 'tis true likewise here, it is profitable for thee, that thou shouldst go a Beggar to Heaven, rather than that thou shouldst go to Hell, laden with the spoils and guilt of Rapine and Injustice.

*Thirdly*, The last Objection that I shall mention, is disability to make Restitution. This indeed is something; where nothing is to be had, every Man must lose his Right: but then remember, that there must be a hearty Repentance for the Sin; and thy Sorrow must be so much greater, by how much thy ability to make Restitution is less; and there must be a willing Mind, a firm Purpose and Resolution of doing it, when God shall enable thee, and diligent endeavours to that purpose. Under the Law those who were not able to make Restitution, were sold for six years, if their service did not make Reparation in less time. 'Tis true indeed, the moderation of the Gospel doth not suffer Christians

to



to deal so hardly with another: but if the Gospel remit of this rigor, and do not allow Christians to challenge it, we should voluntarily do in effect that which they were forced to, that is, we should use our best endeavours and diligence to put our selves into a Condition of making Satisfaction; and we should not look upon any thing beyond the necessary conveniences of Life as our own, till we have done it; unless the Party injured will recede from his Right, in whole or in part. For tho the impossibility of the thing do discharge us for the present, yet the Obligation still lies upon us to do it, so soon as we are able.

And here it will be proper to consider the Case of those, who have compounded with their Creditors for a small part, whether they be in Conscience and Equity released from the whole Debt. I am loth to lay unnecessary Burdens upon Mens Consciences, therefore I am very tender in resolving such Cases: but I ought to have a more tender care of the Souls of Men, than of their Estates: therefore to deal plainly, and to discharge my Conscience in this matter, I think such Persons do, notwithstanding the Composition, stand oblig'd in Equity and

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and Conscience for the whole Debt, and are bound to discharge it, so soon as they can with tolerable convenience. My reason is, because, tho they be discharged in Law, yet the Law does not intend to take off the Obligation of Conscience or Equity, which they are under; but leaves that as it found it. Thus the Case stands; Men who are in a way of Trade are engag'd by the necessities of their calling, to venture a great part of their Estate in other Mens hands, and by this means become liable many times to be undone without their own fault; therefore it is usual, when any Man in a way of Trade becomes disabled, for the Creditors to make such a Composition with him, as his Estate will bear, and upon this Composition to give him a full discharge, so as that they cannot afterwards by Law require of him the remainder of their Debt. Now tho this be a favour to the Debtor, yet it is principally intended for the benefit of the Creditor; because it being his Act, it is to be presumed, that he intended it as much as may be, for his own Advantage; and so it is, for the Creditor has as much Satisfaction at present as can be had, and the Debtor is hereby left in a capacity of recovering himself again

again by his industry and diligence, which could not be, if he were not fully discharged; for if he were still liable for the rest, he would continually be obnoxious to Imprisonment, which would render him incapable of following his calling; or if he were at liberty, he could have no Credit to enable him to do any thing in his calling; for who would trust a Man with any thing, who is liable every moment to have it taken from him? So that the Reason of this plenary discharge is this, that Men, who are otherwise hopeful, and in a fair probability of recovering themselves, may not be render'd incapable of getting an Estate afterwards, whereby they may support themselves, and discharge their Debts. Now this discharge being given in order to these ends, it cannot be imagined that it should be intended to defeat them; but it is in all Reason to be supposed, that the Creditors did not intend to take off the Obligation of Equity and Conscience, only to put the Man into a Condition of doing something towards the enabling him to discharge his Debt. So that unless it were exprest at the Composition, that the Creditor would never expect more from him, upon account of Equity



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Equity and Conscience, but did freely forgive him the rest, the contrary whereof is usually done ; I say, unless it were thus exprest, there's no reason why the Creditor's favour in making a Composition should be abused to his prejudice, and why a legal discharge, given him on purpose for this Reason among others, to put him into a capacity of recovering himself and giving full Satisfaction, should be so interpreted, as to extinguish the equitable right of the Creditor to the remainder of his Debt.

The *Second* Use of this Doctrine of Restitution should be by way of prevention, that Men would take heed of being injurious, and so take away the occasion of Restitution, and free themselves from the Temptation of not performing so difficult and so unwelcome a Duty. It is much easier of the two, not to cozen or oppress thy Neighbour, than after thou hast done it, it will be to bring thyself to make Restitution : therefore we should be very careful, not to be injurious to any one in any kind ; neither immediately by our selves, nor by aiding and assisting others, by our Power and Interest, or skill in the Law, or by any other way, to do Injustice.

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# SERMON XIV.

The Usefulness of Consideration,  
in order to Repentance.

DEUT. XXXII. 29.

*O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!*

**T**HIS Chapter is call'd *Moses* his Song, in which he briefly recounts the various Providences of God toward the People of *Israel*, and the froward Carriage of that People towards him.

First, He puts them in mind how God had chosen them for his peculiar People, and had by a signal Care and Providence conducted them all that tedious Journey, for the space of fourty  
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years in the Wilderness, till he had brought them to the promised Land, which they had now begun to take Possession of.

And then he foretels, how they would behave themselves after all this mercy and kindness God had shewn to them, *ver. 15. Jesurun waxed fat, and kicked, and forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his Salvation.* Upon this he tells them, God would be extremely displeased with them, and would multiply his Judgments upon them, *ver. 19, 20. When the Lord saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provoking of his Sons and of his Daughters; And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no Faith.* And *ver. 23. I will heap mischief upon them, I will spend mine arrows upon them.* And then he enumerates the particular Judgments which he would send upon them: nay, he declares he would have utterly consumed them, but that he was loth to give occasion of so much Triumph to his and their Enemies, *ver. 26, 27. I said, I would scatter them into corners, I would make the*  
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*remembrance of them to cease from among men: were it not, that I feared the wrath of the enemy, lest their adversary should behave themselves strangely, and lest they should say, Our hand is high, and the Lord hath not done all this.*

And he adds the Reason of all this severity; because they were so very stupid and inconsiderate, *ver. 28. For they are a Nation void of Counsel, neither is there any Understanding in them.*

And in the conclusion of all, he represents God as it were breaking out into this vehement and affectionate Wish, *O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!*

*O that they were wise, that they understood this!* What is that? *This* may refer to all that went before. *O that they were wise to consider what God had done for them, and what they had done against him, and what he will do against them, if they continue or renew their former Provocations! O that they were but duly apprehensive of this, and would lay it seriously to heart!*

But from what follows, it seems more particularly to refer to those par-

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ticular Judgments, which God had threatned them withal, and which would certainly befall them, if they still continued in their disobedience. *O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!* That is, the sad Consequences of these their Provocations, that by the Consideration thereof, they might prevent all those Evils and Calamities, by turning from those Sins which would unavoidably bring them upon them.

From the words thus explained, I shall observe these *four* things.

I. That God doth really and heartily desire the Happiness of men, and to prevent their Misery and Ruin. For the very design of these words is to express this to us, and it is done in a very vehement, and, as I may say, passionate manner.

II. That it is a great point of wisdom to consider seriously the last Issue and Consequence of our Actions, whether they tend, and what will follow upon them. And therefore Wisdom is here described by *the Consideration of our latter end.*

III. That this is an excellent means to

to prevent that Misery, which will otherwise befall us. And this is necessarily implied in this Wish, that if they would but consider these things, they might be prevented.

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IV. That the want of this Consideration is the great cause of mens Ruin. And this is likewise implied in the words, that one great reason of mens Ruin is, because they are not so wise, as to consider the fatal Issue and Consequence of a sinful Course. I shall speak briefly to each of these.

I. That God doth really and heartily desire the Happiness of men, and to prevent their Misery and Ruin. To express this to us, God doth put on the vehemency of a Human Passion, *O that they were wise*, &c. The Laws of God are a clear evidence of this; because the observance of them tends to our Happiness. There is no good Prince makes Laws with any other design, than to promote the Publick Welfare and Happiness of his People: and with much more Reason may we imagine, that the infinite good God does by all his Laws design the Happiness of his Creatures. And the Exhortations of Scripture, by which he enforceth his



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Laws, are yet a greater evidence how earnestly he desires the Happiness of his Creatures. For it shews that he is concerned for us, when he useth so many Arguments to perswade us to our Duty, and when he expostulates so vehemently with us for our neglect of it, saying to Sinners, *Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die, O House of Israel? Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life,* says our Blessed Saviour, with great trouble to see men so obstinately set against their own Happiness; and again, *How often would I have gathered you, as a Hen gathereth her Chickens under her wings, and ye would not!* And to satisfy us yet farther, that it is his real desire, by our obedience to his Laws, to prevent our Ruine, God does frequently in Scripture put on the Passions of men, and use all sorts of vehement expressions to this purpose, *Deut. 5. 29. O that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my Commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their Children for ever!* And *Psal. 81. 13. O that my People had hearkned unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my*

my hand against their Adversaries. Jer. 13. 27. *O Israel! wilt thou not be made clean? when shall it once be? And to name but one Text more, when our blessed Saviour wept over Jerusalem, how passionately does he wish that She had known in that her day, the things that belonged to her Peace!*

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And if after all this, we can doubt whether the faithful God means as he says, he hath for our farther assurance, and to put the matter out of all doubt, confirmed his Word by an Oath, Ezek. 33. 11. *As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his ways and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O House of Israel?* So that if words can be any Declaration of a hearty and sincere desire, we have no Reason to doubt, but that God does really desire the Happiness of men, and would gladly prevent their Ruin and Destruction.

If any now ask, Why then are not all men happy? Why do they not escape Ruin and Destruction? And particularly why the People of *Israel*, for whom God here makes this Wish, did not escape those Judgments which

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were threatned; the Prophet shall answer for me, *Hof. 13. 9.* O Israel! *thou hast destroyed thy self.* And David, *Pfal. 81. 11.* My people would not *hearken to my Voice,* Israel would none of me. And our Blessed Saviour, *Mat. 23. 37.* How often would I have gathered thee, as a Hen gathereth her Chickens under her wings, and ye would not! And, *John 5. 40.* Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life. You see what account the Scripture plainly gives of this matter; it rests upon the wills of men, and God hath not thought fit to force Happiness upon men, and to make them wise and good whether they will or no. He presents men with such Motives, and offers such Arguments to their Consideration, as are fit to prevail with reasonable men, and is ready to afford them all necessary assistance, if they be not wanting to themselves; but if they will not *be wise and consider,* if they will stand out against all the Arguments that God can offer, if they will *receive the grace of God in vain,* and *resist his blessed Spirit,* and *reject the counsel of God against themselves,* God hath not in this Case engaged himself to provide any remedy against the obstinacy



stinacy and perverseness of men, but *their Destruction is of themselves, and their blood shall be upon their own heads.* Ser. 14.

And there is no nicety and intricacy in this matter; but if men will consider Scripture and Reason impartially, they will find this to be the plain Resolution of the Case.

So that no Man hath Reason to charge either his Fault, or his Punishment upon God; he is *free from the Blood of all Men*, he sincerely desires our Happiness; but we wilfully ruin our selves: and when he tells us, that *He desires not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live*; that *He would have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth*; that *He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*; he plainly means as he says, and doth not speak to us with any reserve, or dark distinction between his *secret* and *revealed* Will, he does not decree one thing, and declare another.

And if this be so, no Man hath reason to be discouraged from attempting and endeavouring his own Happiness, upon a jealousy and surmise that God hath by any fatal decree put a Bar to it

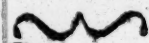
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it from all eternity : for if he had absolutely resolved to make the greatest part of Mankind miserable, without any respect to their Actions in this World, he would never have said, that *He desires that all should be saved* ; he would not have exhorted all men *to work out their own Salvation* : had he taken up any such Resolution, he would have declared it to all the World : for he hath Power enough in his Hands, *to do what he pleaseth, and none can resist his Will* ; so that he did not need to have dissembled the matter, and to have pretended a desire to save men, when he was resolved to ruin them.

This is the *First*, that God doth really and heartily desire the Happiness of men, and to prevent their Misery and Ruin. I proceed to the

II. That it is a great part of wisdom to consider seriously the last Issue and Consequence of our Actions, and whether the Course of Life which we lead does tend, and what will follow upon it. And therefore *Wisdom* is here explained by *Consideration*, *O that they were wise, that they would consider their latter end* ! that is, what will befall them hereafter,

after, what will be the Issue and Consequence of all the Sins and Provocations which they are guilty of.

  
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And this is a principal Point and Property of Wisdom, to look forward, and not only to consider the present Pleasure and Advantage of any Action, but the future Consequence of it: and there is no greater Argument of an imprudent Man, than to gratifie himself for the present in the doing of a thing, which will turn to his greater Prejudice afterwards; especially if the future Inconvenience be great and intolerable, as it is in the Case we are speaking of. For eternal Happiness or Misery depends upon the Actions of this present Life, and according as we behave our selves in this World, it will go well or ill with us for ever; so that this is a matter of vast importance, and deserves our most serious thoughts; and in matters of mighty consequence, a wise Man will take all things into Consideration, and look before him as far as he can. And indeed this is the Reason why things of great moment are said to be things of Consequence, because great things depend and are likely to follow upon them: and then  
surely



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surely that is the greatest concernment, upon which not only the Happiness of this present Life, but our Happiness to all eternity does depend ; and if the good and bad Actions of this Life be of that consequence to us, it is fit every Man should consider what he does, and whither the Course of Life he is engaged or about to engage in, will lead him at last. For this is true Wisdom, to look to the end of things, and to think seriously before hand, what is likely to be the event of such an Action, of such a Course of Life : if we serve God faithfully and do his Will, what will be the consequence of that to us in this World, and the other : And on the other hand, if we live wickedly, and allow our selves in any unlawful and vicious Practice, what will be the end of that Course.

And to any Man that consults the Law of his own Nature, or the Will of God revealed in Scripture, nothing can be plainer than what will be the end of these several ways. God hath plainly told us, and our own Consciences will tell us the same, that *If we do well, we shall be accepted of God, and rewarded by him : but if we do ill,*  
the

*the end of these things is Death; that indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish will be upon every soul of Man that doth evil; but honour and glory and peace to every Man that doth good, in the day when God shall judg the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to the Gospel.*

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So that God hath given us a plain prospect of the different Issues of a virtuous and a wicked Life, and there wants nothing but Consideration to make us to attend to these things, and to lay them seriously to heart. For while men are inconsiderate, they go on stupidly in an evil way, and are not sensible of the danger of their present Course, because they do not attend to the consequence of it: but when their Eyes are once opened by Consideration, they cannot but be sadly apprehensive of the mischief they are running themselves upon. If men would take but a serious and impartial view of their Lives and Actions, if they would consider the tendency of a sinful Course, and whither it will bring them at last; if the vicious and dissolute Man would but look about him, and consider how many have been ruined in that very way that he is in,  
how

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how many lie *slain and wounded in it*; that it is the way to Hell, and leads down to the Chambers of Death; the serious thought of this could not but check him in his Course, and make him resolve upon a better Life. If men were wise, they would consider the consequence of their Actions, and upon Consideration would resolve upon that which they are convinc'd is best. I proceed to the

III. Thing I propounded, which was, that Consideration of the Consequence of our Actions, is an excellent means to prevent the Mischiefs which otherwise we should run into. And this is necessarily implied in the Wish here in the Text, that if we would but consider these things, they might be prevented. For how can any Man, who hath any love or regard for himself, any tenderness for his own Interest and Happiness, see Hell and Destruction before him, which, if he hold on in his evil Course, will certainly swallow him up, and yet venture to go on in his Sins? Can any Man that plainly beholds Misery hastning towards him *like an armed Man*, and *Destruction coming upon him as a whirl-*

*wind,*



wind, think himself unconcerned to prevent it and flee from it? The most dull and stupid Creatures will start back upon the sight of present danger. *Balaam's Ass*, when she saw the Angel of the Lord standing in the way, with his Sword drawn ready to smite her, starts aside, and could not be urged on. Now God hath given us, not only Sense to apprehend a present Evil, but Reason and Consideration to look before us, and to discover Dangers at a distance, to apprehend them as certainly, and with as clear a Conviction of the reality of them, as if they threatned us the next moment: and will any considerate Man, who hath calculated the dangerous Events of Sin, and the dreadful Effects of God's Wrath upon Sinners, go on to *provoke the Lord to jealousy, as if he were stronger than he?* It is not to be imagined, but that if men would seriously consider what Sin is, and what shall be the sad Portion of Sinners hereafter, they would resolve upon a better Course. Would any Man live in the Lusts of the Flesh, and of Intemperance, or out of Covetousness defraud or oppress his Neighbour, did he seriously consider, that

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that God is the avenger of such ; and that because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the Children of disobedience.

I should have great hopes of mens Repentance and Reformation, if they could but once be brought to Consideration : for in most men it is not so much a positive disbelief of the Truth, as inadvertency and want of Consideration, that makes them to go on so securely in a sinful Course. Would but men consider what Sin is, and what will be the fearful consequence of it, probably in this World, but most certainly in the other, they could not chuse but flie from it as the greatest evil in the World.

And to shew what Power and Influence Consideration will probably have to bring men to Repentance, and a change of their Lives, I remember to have somewhere met with a very remarkable story, of one that had a Son that took bad Courses, and would not be reclaimed by all the good Counsel his Father could give him ; at last coming to his Father, who lay upon his Death-Bed, to beg his Blessing, his Father instead

of

of upbraiding him with his bad Life, and undutiful Carriage toward him, spake kindly to him, and told him he had but one thing to desire of him, That every day he would retire and spend one quarter of an hour alone by himself; which he promised his Father faithfully to do, and made it good: after a while it grew tedious to him, to spend even so little time in such bad and uneasie Company, and he began to bethink himself, for what Reason his Father should so earnestly desire of him to do so odd a thing for his sake, and his mind presently suggested to him, that it was to enforce him to Consideration; wisely judging that if by any means he could but bring him to that, he would soon reform his Life and become a new Man. And the thing had its desired effect; for after a very little Consideration, he took up a firm Resolution to change the Course of his Life, and was true to it all his days. I cannot answer for the truth of the Story, but for the moral of it I will; namely, that Consideration is one of the best and most likely means in the World, to bring a bad Man to a better Mind. I now come to the



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IV. and last Particular, namely, that the want of this Consideration is one of the greatest Causes of mens Ruin. And this likewise is implied in the Text; and the reason why God does so vehemently desire that men would be wise and consider, is, because so many are ruin'd and undone for want of it. This is the desperate folly of Mankind, that they seldom think seriously of the Consequence of their Actions, and least of all of such as are of greatest Concernment to them, and have the chief Influence upon their eternal Condition. They do not consider what Mischief and Inconvenience a wicked Life may plunge them into in this World, what Trouble and Disturbance it may give them when they come to die; what Horror and Confusion it may fill them withal when they are leaving this World, and passing into Eternity; and what intolerable Misery and Torment it may bring upon them to all Eternity. Did men ponder and lay to heart Death and Judgment, Heaven and Hell; and would they but let their thoughts dwell upon these things, it is not credible that the generality of men could lead such  
profane

profane and impious, such lewd and dissolute, such secure and careless Lives as they do.

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Would but a Man frequently entertain his Mind with such thoughts as these; I must shortly die and leave this World, and then all the Pleasures and Enjoyments of it will be to me as if they had never been, only that the remembrance of them, and the ill use I have made of them, will be very bitter and grievous to me; after all Death will transmit me out of this World, into a quite different State and Scene of things, into the presence of that great and terrible, that inflexible and impartial Judg, who will *render to every Man according to his Works*; and then all the Evils which I have done in this Life, will rise up in Judgment against me, and fill me with everlasting Confusion, in that great Assembly of Men and Angels, will banish me from the presence of God, and all the Happiness which flows from it, and procure a dreadful Sentence of unspeakable Misery and Torment to be past upon me, which I can never get revert, nor yet ever be able to stand under the weight of it. If men would but enter

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into

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into the serious Consideration of these things, and pursue these thoughts to some Issue and Conclusion, they would take up other Resolutions; and I verily believe, that the want of this hath ruin'd more than even Infidelity itself. And this I take to be the meaning of that question in the *Psalmist*, *Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge?* that is, *no Consideration*; intimating that if they had, they would do better.

All that now remains, is to persuade men to apply their hearts to this piece of Wisdom, to look before them, and to think seriously of the Consequence of their Actions, what will be the final Issue of that Course of Life they are engaged in; and if they continue in it, what will become of them hereafter, what will become of them for ever.

And here I might apply this Text, as God here does to the People of *Israel*, to the publick Condition of this Nation, which is not so very unlike to that of the People of *Israel*: for God seems to have chosen this Nation for his more peculiar People, and hath exercised a very particular Providence towards



towards us, in conducting us through that Wilderness of Confusion, in which we have been wandering for the space of above forty years; and when things were come to the last extremity, and we seemed to stand upon the very brink of Ruin, *Then* (as it is said of the People of *Israel*, ver. 36. of this Chapter) *God repented himself for his servants, when he saw that their Power was gone:* that is, that they were utterly unable to help themselves, and to work their own deliverance. And it may be said of us, as *Moses* does of that People, *Chap. 33. 29. Happy art thou, O Israel, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency!* Never did any Nation struggle with, and get through so many and so great difficulties, as we have several times done.

And I fear we have behaved ourselves toward God, not much better than the People of *Israel* did, but like *Jesurun*, after many deliverances and great mercies, *have waxed fat and kicked, have forsaken the God that made us, and little esteemed the Rock of our Salvation;* by which we have provoked the Lord to jealousy, and have as it were

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forc'd him to multiply his Judgments, and to spend his Arrows upon us, and *to hide his face from us, to see what our end will be*; so that we have reason to fear, that God would have brought utter Ruin and Destruction upon us, and *scatter'd us into corners, and made the remembrance of us to have ceased from among men, had he not feared the wrath of the enemy, and lest the adversaries should have behaved themselves strangely, and lest they should say, Our hand is high, and the Lord hath not done all this*; that is, lest they should ascribe this just Vengeance of God upon a sinful and unthankful Nation to the goodness and righteousness of their own Cause, and to the favour and assistance of the Idols and false Gods whom they worship'd, to the Patronage and Aid of the Virgin Mary and the Saints; to whom, contrary to the Will and Command of the true God, they had offer'd up so many Prayers and Vows, and paid the greatest part of their religious Worship. But *the Lord hath shewn himself greater than all Gods, and in the things wherein they dealt proudly, that he is above them: for our Rock is not as their Rock,*

*Rock, even our enemies themselves being Judges.*

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And we have been too like the People of *Israel* in other respects also, so fickle and inconstant, that after great deliverances we are apt presently to murmur and be discontented, to grow sick of our own Happiness, and to *turn back in our hearts into Egypt*; so that God may complain of us, as he does of his People *Israel*, that nothing that he could do, would bring them to Consideration and make them better, neither his Mercies nor his Judgments. *Isa. 1. 2, 3. Hear, O Heavens! and give ear, O Earth! For the Lord hath spoken; I have nourished and brought up Children, but they have rebelled against me. The Ox knoweth his owner, and the Ass his Master's Crib: but Israel doth not know, my People doth not consider.* And so likewise he complains, that his Judgments had no effect upon them, *ver. 5. Why should ye be smitten any more? Ye will revolt more and more.* Well therefore may it be said of us, as it was of them in the Verse before the Text, *They are a Nation void of knowledge, neither is there any understanding in them.* And the Wish that follows in



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the Text, is as seasonable for us as it was for them, *O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end !*

And by parity of Reason, this may likewise be applyed to particular Persons, and to perswade every one of us to a serious Consideration of the final Issue and Consequence of our Actions. I will only offer these *two* Arguments.

I. That Consideration is the proper Act of reasonable Creatures, and that whereby we shew our selves men. So the Prophet intimates, *Isa. 46. 8. Remember this, and shew your selves men; bring it again to mind, O ye transgressors !* that is, consider it well, think of it again and again, ye that run on so furiously in a sinful Course, what the end and issue of these things will be. If ye do not do this, you do not *shew your selves men*, you do not act like reasonable Creatures, to whom it is peculiar to propose to themselves some end and design of their Actions ; but rather like *brute Creatures, which have no understanding*, and act only by a natural instinct, without any Consideration of the end of their Actions, or of the means conducing to it.

II. Whe-

II. Whether we consider it or not, <sup>Ser. 14.</sup> our latter end will come; and all those dismal Consequences of a sinful Course, which God hath so plainly threatned, and our own Consciences do so much dread, will certainly overtake us at last; and we cannot, by not thinking of these things, ever prevent or avoid them. Death will come, and after that the Judgment, and an irreversibile Doom will pass upon us, according to all the evil that we have done, and all the good that we have neglected to do in this Life, under the heavy weight and pressure whereof we must lie groaning, and bewailing our selves to everlasting Ages.

God now exerciseth his Mercy and Patience and Long-suffering towards us, in expectation of our amendment; he reprieves us on purpose that we may repent, and in hopes that we will at last consider and grow wiser; for *he is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to Repentance*: but if we will trifle away this day of God's Grace and Patience, if we will not consider and bethink our selves, there is another day that will certainly come, *That great and terrible Day of the*

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*the Lord, in which the Heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the Elements shall melt with fervent heat; the Earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burnt up.*

*Seeing then all these things shall be, let us consider seriously what manner of Persons we ought to be in all holy Conversation and Godliness, waiting for and hastning unto the coming of the Day of God; To whom be glory now and for ever.*

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# SERMON XV.

The Danger of Impenitence,  
where the Gospel is preach'd.

MATTH. XI. 21, 22.

*Woe unto thee Chorazin, woe unto thee  
Bethsaida! for if the mighty works  
which were done in you, had been done  
in Tyre and Sidon, they would have  
repented long ago in sackcloth and  
ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be  
more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at  
the day of Judgment, than for you.*

**A**fter our Blessed Saviour had in-  
structed, and sent forth his Dis-  
ciples, he himself went abroad to  
preach unto the Cities of *Israel*; par-  
ticularly he spent much time in the  
Cities

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Cities of *Galilee*, *Chorazin*, and *Bethsaida*, and *Capernaum*, preaching the Gospel to them, and working many and great Miracles among them; but with little or no success: which was the cause of his denouncing this terrible Woe against them, *ver. 20.* Then began he to upbraid the Cities, wherein most of his mighty Works were done, because they repented not. *Woe unto thee Chorazin, &c.*

In which words our Saviour declares the sad and miserable Condition of those two Cities, *Chorazin* and *Bethsaida*, which had neglected such an opportunity, and resisted and withstood such means of Repentance, as would have effectually reclaimed the most wicked Cities and People that can be instanced in any Age, *Tyre* and *Sidon* and *Sodom*; and therefore he tells them, that their Condition was much worse, and that they should fall under a heavier Sentence at the day of Judgment, than the People of those Cities, whom they had always look'd upon as the greatest Sinners that ever were in the World. This is the plain meaning of the words in general; but yet there are some difficulties in them, which

which I shall endeavour to clear, and then proceed to raise such Observations from them, as may be instructive and useful to us.

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The Difficulties are these :

I. What Repentance is here spoken of; whether an external Repentance, in shew and appearance only, or an inward and real and sincere Repentance.

II. In what sense it is said, that *Tyre and Sidon would have repented.*

III. What is meant by their *would have repented long ago.*

IV. How this Assertion of our Saviour's, that Miracles would have converted *Tyre and Sidon*, is reconcilable with that other Saying of his, *Luke 16. 31.* in the Parable of the rich Man and *Lazarus*, that *those who believed not Moses and the Prophets, neither would they be persuaded, tho' one rose from the dead.*

I. What Repentance is here spoken of; whether a mere external and hypocritical Repentance in shew and appearance only, or an inward and real and sincere Repentance.

The reason of this Doubt depends upon the different Theories of Divines.



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vines, about the sufficiency of Grace accompanying the outward Means of Repentance, and whether an irresistible degree of God's Grace be necessary to Repentance: for they who deny sufficient Grace to accompany the outward Means of Repentance, and assert an irresistible degree of God's Grace necessary to Repentance, are forced to say, that our Saviour here speaks of a mere External Repentance: because if he spake of an inward and sincere Repentance, then it must be granted, that sufficient inward Grace did accompany the Miracles that were wrought in *Chorazin* and *Bethsaida*, to bring men to Repentance; because what was afforded to them, would have brought *Tyre* and *Sidon* to Repentance. And that which would have effected a thing, cannot be denied to be sufficient; so that unless our Saviour here speaks of a mere External Repentance, either the outward Means of Repentance, as Preaching and Miracles, must be granted to be sufficient to bring men to Repentance, without the inward Operation of God's Grace upon the Minds of Men; or else a sufficient degree of God's Grace

Grace must be acknowledged to accompany the outward Means of Repentance. Again, if an irresistible degree of Grace be necessary to true Repentance, it is plain, *Chorazin* and *Bethsaida* had it not, because they did not repent; and yet without this *Tyre* and *Sidon* could not have sincerely repented; therefore our Saviour here must speak of a mere External Repentance. Thus some argue, as they do likewise concerning the Repentance of *Niniveh*, making that also to be merely External, because they are loth to allow true Repentance to Heathens.

But it seems very plain, that our Saviour does speak of an inward and true and sincere Repentance; and therefore the Doctrines that will not admit this, are not true. For our Saviour speaks of the same kind of Repentance, that he upbraided them with the want of, in the Verse before the Text. *Then began he to upbraid the Cities wherein most of his mighty Works were done, because they repented not; that is, because they were not brought to a sincere Repentance by his preaching, which was confirmed by such great*

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great Miracles. 'Tis true indeed, he mentions the outward Signs and Expressions of Repentance, when he says, *They would have repented in sackcloth and ashes*; but not as excluding inward and real Repentance, but supposing it, as is evident from what is said in the next Verse, *It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sydon at the day of Judgment, than for you*: for tho an external and hypocritical Repentance may prevail with God to put off temporal Judgments, yet surely it will be but a very small, if any mitigation of our Condemnation at the day of Judgment: so that the Repentance here spoken of cannot, without great violence to the scope and design of our Saviour's Argument, be understood only of an external shew and appearance of Repentance.

II. The next Difficulty to be cleared, is, in what Sense it is here said, *that if the mighty Works which were done by our Saviour among the Jews, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented.*

Some to avoid the inconvenience which they apprehend to be in the  
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more strict and literal Sense of the words, look upon them as Hyperbolic, as we say *Such a thing would move a Stone*, or the like, when we would express something to be very sad and grievous; so here to aggravate the Impenitence of the *Jews*, our Saviour says, that they resisted those Means of Repentance, which one would think should almost have prevailed upon the greatest and most obdurate Sinners that ever were; but not intending to affirm any such thing.

But there is no colour for this, if we consider that our Saviour reasons from the Supposition of such a thing, that therefore the Case of *Tyre and Sidon* would really be *more tolerable at the day of Judgment than theirs*; because *they would have repented*, but the *Jews did not*.

Others perhaps understand the words too strictly, as if our Saviour had spoken according to what he certainly foreknew would have happened to the People of *Tyre and Sidon*, if such Miracles had been wrought among them. And no doubt but in that Case God did certainly

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know what they would have done : but yet I should rather chuse to understand the words as spoken popularly, according to what in all humane appearance and probability would have hapned, if such External Means of Repentance, accompanied with an ordinary Grace of God, had been afforded to them of Tyre and Sidon. And thus the old *Latin* Interpreter seems to have understood the next words, *If the mighty Works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom*, *ἐμειναν δὲν*, *forte mansissent, it would perhaps have remained to this day, in all likelihood it had continued till now.* Much the same with that passage of the Prophet, Ezek. 3. 5, 6. *Thou art not sent to a People of a strange Speech, and of a hard Language, but to the House of Israel: Surely had I sent thee to them, they would have hearkned unto thee; that is, in all probability they would, there is little doubt to be made of the contrary.* And this is sufficient Foundation for our Saviour's reasoning afterwards, that *it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of Judgment than for them.* And if we may

may judge what they would have done before, by what they did afterward, there is more than probability for it: for we read in the 21<sup>st</sup> Chapter of the *Acts*, ver. 3. and ver. 27. that the Inhabitants of *Tyre* and *Sidon* receiv'd the Gospel, and kindly entertain'd St. *Paul*, when the *Jews* rejected them both. The

III. Thing to be cleared, is, What is meant by *long ago*; *They would have repented long ago*.

Some understand this, as if our Saviour had said, they would not have stood out so long against so much Preaching, and so many Miracles; but would at first have repented, long before our Saviour gave over *Chorazin* and *Bethsaida*, for obstinate and incorrigible Sinners; they would not only have repented at last, but much sooner and without so much ado.

But this does not seem to be the meaning of the words; but our Saviour seems to refer to those antient Times *long ago*, when the Prophets denounced Judgments against *Tyre* and *Sidon*, particularly the Prophet *Ezekiel*; and to say, that if in those days the preaching of that Prophet had been accompanied with such Miracles as



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our Saviour wrought in the Cities of *Galilee, Tyre and Sidon* would in those days have repented.

The *last* and greatest difficulty of all is, How this Assertion of our Saviour, that Miracles would have converted *Tyre and Sidon*, is reconcilable with that Discourse of our Saviour's, *Luke 16.* in the Parable of the rich Man and *Lazarus*, that *Those who would not believe Moses and the Prophets, would not have been perswaded, tho one had rose from the dead.*

The true answer to which difficulty in short is this; That when our Saviour says, *If they believe not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be perswaded, tho one rose from the dead,* he does not hereby weaken the force of Miracles, or their aptness to convince men and bring them to Repentance, but rather confirm it; because *Moses and the Prophets* had the Attestation of many and great Miracles, and therefore there was no reason to think, that they who would not believe the Writings and Doctrine of *Moses and the Prophets*, which had the Confirmation of so many Miracles, and was owned by themselves  
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to have so, should be wrought upon by one particular Miracle, *The coming of one from the dead, and speaking unto them*: or however this might move and astonish them for the present, yet it was not likely that the Grace of God should concur with such an extraordinary Means, to render it effectual to their Conversion and Repentance, who had wilfully despised and obstinately rejected that which had a much greater Confirmation, than the Discourse of a Man risen from the dead, and was appointed by God for the ordinary and standing Means of bringing men to Repentance. So that our Saviour might with reason enough pronounce that *Tyre and Sidon*, who never had a standing Revelation of God to bring them to Repentance, nor had rejected it, would upon Miracles extraordinarily wrought among them, have repented; and yet deny it elsewhere to be likely, that they who rejected a standing Revelation of God confirmed by Miracles, which call'd them to Repentance, would probably be brought to Repentance by a particular Miracle; or that God should

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afford his Grace to make it effectual for their Repentance and Salvation.

The words being thus cleared, I come now to raise such Observations from them, as may be instructive and useful to us.

I. I observe from this Discourse of our Saviour, that Miracles are of great force and efficacy to bring men to Repentance.

This our Saviour's Discourse here supposeth; otherwise their Impenitence had not been so Criminal and Inexcusable upon that account, *That such mighty works had been done among them*, as would probably have prevailed upon some of the worst People that had been in the World; for such were the Inhabitants of *Tyre* and *Sidon*, guilty of great Covetousness and Fraud, Pride and Luxury, the usual Sins of Places of great Traffick and Commerce: and such to be sure was *Sodom*; and yet our Saviour tells us, that the Miracles which he had wrought in the Cities of *Israel*, would in all probability have brought those great Sinners to Repentance; namely, by bringing them to Faith, and convincing them of



of the Truth and Divinity of that Doctrine which he preached unto them, and which contains such powerful Arguments to Repentance and Amendment of Life.

II. I observe likewise from our Saviour's Discourse, that God is not always obliged to work Miracles for the Conversion of Sinners. It is great goodness in him to afford sufficient Means of Repentance to men, as he did to *Tyre* and *Sidon*, in calling them to Repentance by his Prophet; tho such Miracles were not wrought among them, as God thought fit to accompany our Saviour's Preaching withal.

This I observe, to prevent a kind of bold and saucy Objection, which some would perhaps be apt to make; If *Tyre* and *Sidon* would have repented, had such Miracles been wrought among them, as our Saviour wrought in *Chorazin* and *Bethsaida*, why were they not wrought, that they might have repented? To which it is sufficient Answer to say, That God is not obliged to do all that is possible to be done, to reclaim men from their Sins; he is not obliged to over-

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power their Wills, and to work irresistibly upon their Minds, which he can easily do; he is not obliged to work Miracles for every particular Man's Conviction; nor where he vouchsafeth to do this, is he obliged always to work the greatest and most convincing Miracles; his Goodness will not suffer him to omit what is necessary and sufficient to bring men to Repentance and Happiness, nay beyond this he many times does more; but it is sufficient to vindicate the Justice and Goodness of God, that he is not wanting to us, in affording the Means necessary to reclaim us from our Sins, and to bring us to Goodness. That which is properly our part, is to make use of those Means which God affords us to become better, and not to prescribe to him how much he should do for us; to be thankful that he hath done so much, and not to find fault with him for having done no more.

III. I observe farther from our Saviour's Discourse, That the External Means of Repentance which God affords to men, do suppose an Inward Grace of God accompanying them,

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sufficiently enabling men to repent, if it be not their own Fault; I say a sufficient Grace of God accompanying the outward Means of Repentance, till by our wilful and obstinate neglect and resistance and opposition of this Grace, we provoke God to withdraw it from the Means, or else to withdraw both the Grace and the Means from us: otherwise Impenitence after such External Means afforded, would be no new and special Fault. For if the Concurrence of God's Grace with the outward Means be necessary to work Repentance, then the Impenitence of those to whom this Grace is not afforded, which yet is necessary to Repentance, is neither any new Sin, nor any new Aggravation of their former Impenitence. For no Man can imagine that the just God will charge men with new Guilt, and increase their Condemnation, for remaining impenitent in such Circumstances in which it is impossible for them to repent.

IV. I observe from this Discourse of our Saviour's, That an Irresistible degree of Grace is not necessary to Repentance, nor commonly afforded



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forded to those who do repent. God may where he pleaseth, without injury to any Man, over-power his Will, and stop him in his Course, and hinder him from making himself miserable, and by an Irresistible Light convince him of his Error and the Evil of his ways, and bring him to a better Mind: But this God seldom does; and when he does it, it is very probable it is not so much for their own sakes, as to make them Instruments of Good to others. Thus by a secret but over-powering influence he over-ruled the Disciples to follow our Saviour, and to leave their Callings and Relations, and all their temporal Concernments to do it. But one of the most remarkable Examples of this extraordinary Grace of God, is *St. Paul*, who was violently stopt in his Course of persecuting the Christians, and convinc'd of his Sin, and brought over to Christianity, in a very extraordinary and forcible manner. And of this miraculous and extraordinary Conversion, God himself gives this account, *That he was a chosen Vessel unto him, to bear his name before the Gentiles, and Kings,*  
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and the Children of Israel, Acts 9. 15. And St. Paul tells us, Gal. 1. 15, 16. *That for this end God had separated him from his Mother's Womb, and call'd him by his Grace, and revealed his Son to him in that extraordinary manner, that he might preach him among the Heathen.* Ser. 15.

But generally God does not bring men thus to Repentance; nor is it necessary he should. For if an irresistible degree of Grace were always necessary to bring men to Repentance, there could be no difference between the Impenitence of *Chorazin* and *Bethsaida*, and of *Tyre* and *Sidon*. For according to this Doctrine of the Necessity of Irresistible Grace to the Conversion of every Man, it is evident, that *Tyre* and *Sidon* neither could, nor would have repented, without an irresistible degree of God's Grace accompanying the outward Means of Repentance which he afforded to them; because such a degree of Grace is necessary to Repentance, and without it, it is impossible for any Man to repent. But then it is as plain on the contrary, that if *Chorazin* and *Bethsaida* had had

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had the same irresistible degree of God's Grace, together with the outward Means of Repentance afforded to them, that they would have repented as certainly as *Tyre* and *Sidon*. Where then is the reason of upbraiding the Impenitence of the one, more than of the other? Where the Aggravation of the one's Guilt above the other? Where the Justice of punishing the Impenitence of *Chorazin* and *Bethsaida*, more than theirs of *Tyre* and *Sidon*? For upon this Supposition, they must either have repented both alike, or have been both equally Impenitent. The Sum of what I have said, is this, That if no Man does, nor can repent, without such a degree of God's Grace as cannot be resisted, no Man's Repentance is commendable, nor is one Man's Impenitence more blameable than another's; *Chorazin* and *Bethsaida* can be in no more fault for continuing Impenitent, than *Tyre* and *Sidon* were. For either this irresistible Grace is afforded to men or not: if it be, their Repentance is necessary, and they cannot help it; if it be not, their Repentance is impossible, and consequently their



their Impenitence is necessary, and they cannot help it neither.

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V. I observe from the main scope of our Saviour's Discourse, That the Sins and Impenitence of Men receive their Aggravation, and consequently shall have their Punishment proportionable to the Opportunities and Means of Repentance, which those Persons have enjoyed and neglected.

For what is here said of Miracles, is by equality of Reason likewise true of all other Advantages and Means of Repentance and Salvation. The Reason why Miracles will be such an Aggravation of the Condemnation of men is, because they are so proper and powerful a Means to convince them of the Truth and Divinity of that Doctrine which calls them to Repentance. So that all those Means which God affords to us, of the Knowledg of our Duty, of Conviction of the Evil and Danger of a sinful Course, are so many Helps and Motives to Repentance, and consequently will prove so many Aggravations of our Sin and Punishment,

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nishment, if we continue impenitent.  
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VI. and *last* Observation, and which naturally follows from the former, is this, That the Case of those who are impenitent under the Gospel, is of all others the most dangerous, and their Damnation shall be heaviest and most severe.

And this brings the Case of these Cities here in the Text home to our selves. For in truth there is no material difference between the Case of *Chorazin* and *Bethsaida* and *Capernaum*, and of our selves in this City and Nation, who enjoy the clear Light of the Gospel, with all the freedom, and all the Advantages that any People ever did. The Mercies of God to this Nation have been very great, especially in bringing us out of that darkness and superstition, which covered this Western part of the World; in rescuing us from that great Corruption and Degeneracy of the Christian Religion which prevailed among us, by so early and so regular a Reformation; and in continuing so long this great Blessing to us.

us. The Judgments of God have been likewise very great upon us for our Sins : *God hath manifested himself by terrible things in righteousness* ; our Eyes have seen many and dismal Calamities in the space of a few years, which call loudly upon us to repent and turn to God. God hath afforded us the most effectual Means of Repentance, and hath taken the most effectual Course of bringing us to it. And tho our Blessed Saviour do not speak to us in Person, nor do we at this day see Miracles wrought among us, as the *Jews* did ; yet we have the Doctrine which our Blessed Saviour preach'd, faithfully transmitted to us, and a credible Relation of the Miracles wrought for the Confirmation of that Doctrine, and many other Arguments to perswade us of the Truth of it, which those to whom our Saviour spake had not, nor could not then have, taken from the accomplishing of our Saviour's Predictions, after his Death ; the speedy Propagation and wonderful Success of this Doctrine in the World, by weak and inconsiderable Means, against all the Power and Opposition of the World ; the Destruction



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struction of *Jerusalem*, and the Dispersion of the *Jewish* Nation, according to our Saviour's Propheſie; beſides many more that might be mention'd. And which is a mighty Advantage to us, we are free from thoſe Prejudices againſt the Perſon of our Saviour and his Doctrin, which the *Jews*, by the reverence which they bore to their Rulers and Teachers, were generally poſſeſt withal; we are brought up in the belief of it, and have drunk it in by Education; and if we believe it, as we all profeſs to do, we have all the Obligation and all the Arguments to Repentance, which the *Jews* could poſſibly have from the Miracles which they ſaw; for they were Means of Repentance to them, no otherwiſe than as they brought them to the belief of our Saviour's Doctrin, which call'd them to Repentance.

So that if we continue impenitent, the ſame woe is denounced againſt us, that is againſt *Chorazin* and *Bethſaida*; and we may be ſaid with *Capernaum*, to be lifted up to Heaven, by the enjoyment of the moſt excellent Means and Advantages of Salvation, that any People ever did, which if we neglect

lect, and still continue wicked and impenitent under them, we may justly fear, that with them *we shall be thrown down to Hell*, and have our place in the lowest part of that dismal Dungeon, and in the very Center of that fiery Furnace.

Never was there greater cause to upbraid the Impenitence of any People, than of us, considering the Means and Opportunities which we enjoy; and never had any greater reason to fear a severer Doom, than we have. Impenitence in a Heathen is a great Sin; else how should God judg the World? But God takes no notice of that, in comparison of the Impenitence of Christians, who enjoy the Gospel, and are convinced of the Truth, and upon the greatest reason in the World profess to believe it. We Christians have all the Obligations to Repentance, that Reason and Revelation, Nature and Grace can lay upon us. Art thou convinced that thou hast sinned, and done that which is contrary to thy Duty, and thereby provoked the Wrath of God, and incensed his Justice against thee? As thou art a Man, and upon the stock of Natural Principles, thou

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art obliged to repentance. The same Light of Reason which discovers to thee the Errors of thy Life, and challengeth thee for thy Impiety and Intemperance, for thy Injustice and Oppression, for thy Pride and Passion; the same Natural Conscience which accuseth thee of any Miscarriages, does oblige thee to be sorry for it, *to turn from thy evil ways, and to break off thy Sins by Repentance.* For nothing can be more unreasonable, than for a Man to know a Fault, and yet not think himself bound to be sorry for it; to be convinced of the evil of his ways, and not to think himself obliged by that very Conviction, to turn from it and forsake it. If there be any such thing as a natural *Law written in Mens Hearts*, which the Apostle tells us the Heathens had, it is impossible to imagine, but that the Law which obligeth Men not to transgress, should oblige them to Repentance in case of Transgression. And this every Man in the World is bound to, tho he had never seen the Bible, nor heard of the Name of Christ. And the Revelation of the Gospel doth not supersede this Obligation, but



but adds new Strength and Force to it: and by how much this Duty of Repentance is more clearly revealed by our Blessed Saviour in the Gospel; by how much the Arguments which the Gospel useth to persuade Men, and encourage them to Repentance, are greater and more powerful; by so much is the Impenitence of those who live under the Gospel the more inexcusable.

Had we only some faint hopes of God's Mercy, a doubtful Opinion and weak Persuasion of the Rewards and Punishments of another World; yet we have a Law within us, which upon the probability of these Considerations would oblige us to Repentance. Indeed if Men were assur'd upon good grounds, that there would be no future Rewards and Punishments; then the Sanction of the Law were gone, and it would lose its Force and Obligation: or if we did despair of the Mercy of God, and had good Reason to think Repentance impossible, or that it would do us no good; in that case there would be no sufficient Motive and Argument to Repentance: for no Man can return to his

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Duty, without returning to the love of God and Goodness; and no man can return to the love of God, who believes that he bears an implacable hatred against him, and is resolved to make him miserable for ever. During this Persuasion no Man can repent. And this seems to be the reason, why the Devils continue impenitent.

But the Heathens were not without hopes of God's Mercy, and upon those small hopes which they had, they encouraged themselves into Repentance; as you may see in the instance of the *Ninivites*, *Let them turn every one from his evil ways, and from the violence that is in his hands. Who can tell, if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?* Jonah 3. 8, 9. But if we, who have the clearest Discoveries, and the highest Assurance of this, who profess to believe that God hath declared himself placable to all Mankind, that *he is in Christ reconciling the World to himself*, and that upon our Repentance *he will not impute our Sins to us*; if we, to whom *the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of Men*, and to whom *Life and Im-*

*Immortality are brought to Light by the Gospel; if after all this, we still go on in an impenitent Course, what shall we be able to plead in excuse of our selves at that great Day? The men of Niniveh shall rise up in Judgment against such an impenitent Generation, and condemn it; because they repented upon the terror of lighter Threatnings, and upon the encouragement of weaker Hopes.*

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And therefore it concerns us, who call our selves Christians, and enjoy the clear Revelation of the Gospel, to look about us, and take heed how we continue in an Evil Course. For if we remain impenitent, after all the Arguments which the Gospel, super-added to the Light of Nature, affords to us to bring us to Repentance, it shall not only *be more tolerable for the men of Niniveh, but for Tyre and Sidon, for Sodom and Gomorrah, the most wicked and impenitent Heathens, at the Day of Judgment, than for us.* For because we have stronger Arguments, and more powerful Encouragements to Repentance, than they had, if we do not repent, we shall meet with a heavier Doom, and a fiercer Dam-



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Damnation. The Heathen World had many excuses to plead for themselves, which we have not. *The times of that ignorance God winked at: but now commands all men every where to repent; because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judg the World in Righteousness, by that Man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.*

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